

ДУЭЛЬ ИСТОРИКОВ

Марк

СОЛОНИН

**ВЕЛИКАЯ ОТЕЧЕСТВЕННАЯ:
ХОТЕЛИ ЛИ РУССКИЕ ВОЙНЫ?**

Владимир

ДАЙНЕС

Abstract

And again and again in the debate about the Great Patriotic War, the name of Mark Solonin pops up. And again, passions boil around his version. So did Hitler attack his recent Soviet friend Stalin, who yesterday congratulated him on another victory in Europe, or did Hitler deliver a preemptive strike?

Solonin's version is opposed by a well-known military historian - Vladimir Daines, author of dozens of works on the history of the Great Patriotic War, biographer of Zhukov and Rokossovsky, debunker of many myths about the history of World War II.

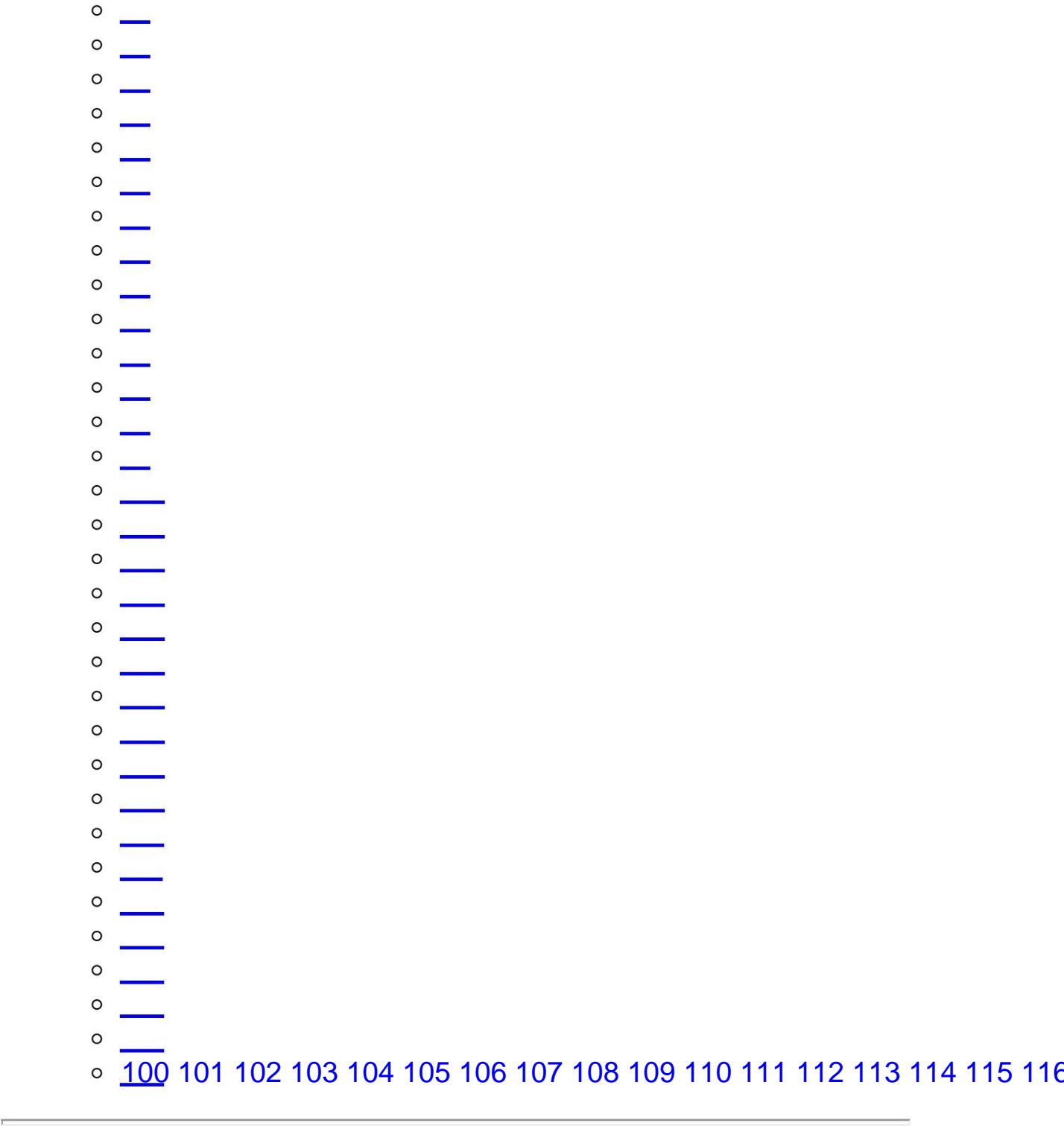
We invite the reader to make his own conclusion as to which historians of rights, whose version is better argued.

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- "Thundering with fire, sparkling with the
- brilliance of steel" V. Daines. Were not prepared for either — defense or
- offensive Part II. Preemptive strike or treacherous attack? M.
- Solonin. With little blood, on foreign territory . —
-
- Plan according to
- plans On a solid foundation
- Cautious optimism New
- horizons "Provocative
- war" "In bloc with Germany,
- Japan and Italy." Manuscripts did not burn Deceive
- your own so that others
- do not guess Unshakable foundations To Berlin!
- From complex to simple
- "Thundering
- with fire, sparkling with the .
- brilliance of steel" From April 6 to May 15
- Final touches The
- terrible price of the
- shameful "Victory" "Invade, defeat and
- seize . — All around the march! Political Decision
- V. Daines. No
- declaration of war
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**Vladimir Ottovich Daines, Mark
Solonin
Great Patriotic War. Did the
Russians want war?**

Part I. What Stalin planned and did not plan

M. Solonin. Three plans of Comrade Stalin

At the beginning of World War II, Stalin helped Hitler. This, to put it politically correct, is sparing the national pride of the Great Russians. And you can say this: "The Soviet Union helped Nazi Germany."

Ordered to forget everything

Let's not digress into an endless discussion about how significant this support was, Germany could have launched and won a military campaign in the West without this support. This discussion will be endless, since there is no mathematical model that formalizes the Russian proverb "Road spoon to dinner." The million tons of oil products that Germany received from the USSR can be easily converted into dollars, Reichsmarks, rubles and tugriks. The amount will turn out - on the scale of the world economy - very modest (by the way, the total cost of flour transported along the Road of Life to besieged Leningrad in the winter of 1941-1942 was even less). However, for Germany, which got involved

in a war against a coalition of two world powers, each ton of Soviet gasoline had a special value, inexpressible in simple monetary terms. And the words of the head of government of another great power spoken from a high tribune: "The ideology of Hitlerism, like any other ideological system, can be recognized or denied, this is a matter of political views ... but it is not only senseless, but also criminal to wage such a war as the war for the destruction of Hitlerism, covered with a false flag of the struggle for democracy" - they were also worth a lot. It was not for nothing that the Germans spent Soviet aviation gasoline to refuel Luftwaffe aircraft, from which the text of this speech by Molotov was scattered over France in the form of a leaflet.

It's all bad, it's not good. "You can not pray for King Herod - the Mother of God does not order." And here they didn't just "pray for the accursed Herod", but also helped him with quite practical deeds. And before that

they helped that they overslept the moment when Hitler gathered his strength, drank live blood and dealt a crushing blow to his recent ally ...

Whatever words you don't come up with, what dodgy thoughts you don't write down on paper - and it was clear to everyone that we sat down with this "great friendship" in a big puddle. Not good. And so that the memories of this vile stupidity would not darken the bright face of the native Communist Party, it was decided to forget everything.

Not a single post-war textbook, not a single popular scientific book could contain even the slightest mention of the Secret Protocol to the Non-Aggression Pact (the very fact of its existence was denied with foam at the mouth for almost half a century), of the joint Soviet-German statement of September 28, 1939 years, about the congratulations that flew from Moscow to Berlin after each successful act of Nazi aggression. And in the reference book "Foreign Trade of the USSR" (M., "Finance and Statistics", 1982), data were given on the foreign trade turnover of the USSR in 1940 with a hundred states of the world - except Germany, so read about a million tons of oil products there was nowhere. But all these efforts did not help much - it is difficult to erase from the people's memory what happened before our eyes and with the participation of tens of millions.

Where is the signed document?

Twenty years ago Viktor Suvorov's book Icebreaker was published. "Brothers and sisters," said the author, "open your eyes! It wasn't like that at all!" It was not Hitler who used us, it was Stalin who used the narcissistic corporal as a battering ram, an "icebreaker", breaking through the European ice for the "Soviet ship". Yes, Stalin supported Hitler, but exactly and only in the same way as a rope supports a hanged man. Stalin did not "sleep the war" - he prepared for it comprehensively. Stalin was not at all a naive fool who "believed in Ribbentrop's signature", he was not a hysterical coward who "chased away any thought of war" and "was afraid to give Hitler a reason to attack." Stalin was preparing his country and army to deliver a devastating blow to Nazi Germany. Yes, it did not work out, yes, we were late with the start

strategic deployment of the army, but at least they tried, they tried to punch the demon-possessed Fuhrer in the back of the head with a butt. What

started here! Has there been another similar scandal in the history of our "social thought"? The information field was filled with wild noise, shouting, screeching, mocking laughter. Huge areas of Karelian forests have been exhausted for the publication of dozens of libelous books: The Myth of the Icebreaker, Anti-Suvorov, New Anti-Suvorov, V. Suvorov's Main Lie, V. Suvorov's Falsehood, How Suvorov Invented History. For some characters in Russian historical science, the mere mention of Suvorov's name causes an uncontrollable eruption: "Scoundrel! Defector! Judas! He lies on every word! No no and one more time no! We were true allies of Hitler! Comrade Stalin did not even have in his mind such a thing as to deceive Hitler's party lord! We were merciless to the enemies of the Reich, and if it were not for the unfortunate trouble that happened at dawn on June 22, we would have continued to drive trains with oil and grain to Germany - if only our fascist friends continued to kill the hated Anglo-Saxons.

I hope to live to see the time when the history of this outstanding mental anomaly becomes the subject of serious study by the best specialists. In the meantime, within the framework of this article, I will try to collect and analyze those documents and facts that have been revealed over the past two decades and on the basis of which it is already possible to formulate well-reasoned hypotheses about what kind of war Stalin was preparing for. In order not to transfer the discussion of these hypotheses into the area of emotions and shouting, I firmly promise not to use such words as "invasion", "aggression", "enslavement", "expansion", etc. There are other platforms for discussing the problem in such terms. On the pages of the "Military Industrial Courier" we will talk about the "offensive", "strategic deployment", "mobilization plan", "covering the concentration" and other categories of military historical

science. Since we are talking about science (as opposed to ideology and demagogy), it is absolutely necessary to say at least a few words about the subject of research and its features. These features are not simple and, as I was able to see recently, are not understood by everyone.

Once again, I was reminded of this by a journalist from the Voice of America (yes, the same "subversive anti-Soviet center" funded by the US State Department). On the eve of the mourning date (June 22), the radio station wanted to know my opinion about Stalin's military-political plans. For about forty minutes I read (fortunately, I was sitting at my desk at home) excerpts from numerous highly important, top secret documents. They listened to me attentively, asked the following question, *I* read out the following document... Finally, the telephone in Washington

delivered its verdict: "You know, Mark Semyonovich, you are getting some kind of conspiracy theories. Not a single document, only conjectures and inventions. I confess:

despite my seemingly rich experience of dealing with journalists, I was momentarily speechless. "What do you mean there are no documents? And what are we talking about for an hour?" The "Washington Regional Committee" laughed amiably: "Come on, what kind of "documents" are these? General Staff plans? So the military always write something and draw arrows on the maps, this is their job. In order to start a war, a Principal Political Decision is needed. Do you have such a document signed by Stalin? I didn't

have a document. *I* was so discouraged by the iron logic of the interlocutor that I was already completely at a loss and did not ask him the most obvious question: "Has anyone seen a document signed personally by Stalin, in which a decision would be formulated to strengthen world peace?". No, really -

where is the document? We were told a thousand and one times about the "invariably peaceful foreign policy of the Soviet Union." In 1971, the collection "The USSR in the Struggle for Peace on the Eve of World War II" was released, there are hundreds of documents (although such "trifle and nonsense" as the operational plans of the General Staff of the Red Army, the compilers of the collection forgot to include), but the main thing is not there! Where is the paper written by Stalin himself: "I, Joseph Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili (Stalin), order to fight for peace and disarmament, not to get involved in any war, patiently wait for someone to attack us first, and also order this particular order of mine to count Principal Political Decision".

There is no such paper. And no one has ever seen a political decision to sign a non-aggression pact with Germany. There is a pact (published in all the central newspapers), Ribbentrop was in Moscow (there are corresponding photographs), but where is Stalin's written decision? In the so-called Special folders of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, declassified at the beginning of the 21st century, among the minutes of the meetings of August 1939, the Pact and Ribbentrop

are not mentioned at all in any case. And where is the notorious Principal Political Decision signed by Stalin on the beginning of the Great Terror of 1937? About the war against Finland?

About the annexation of the three Baltic countries in 1940? Why has no one found these documents? Did you even start looking?

All decisions were made by the owner, alone

There is only one answer to these questions, and everyone knows it very well (more precisely, they knew it). It was only in recent years, after the release of the Icebreaker, that high-profile domestic historians began to so selflessly "mow like psychos." Before that, everyone understood without further ado that in the era of Stalin, the country did not live according to the Constitution, but according to certain unwritten rules. Within the framework of these "rules", constitutional authorities (in particular, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, endowed with the exclusive right to resolve issues of war and peace) were not even a place for political discussions, on the contrary, the most important (fundamental) political decisions were made by one person, and this person until May 1941 He has not formally held any public office for years. (Our newly-minted thieves in law should have thought: why on earth could the directives of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR have the signature of one of the many deputies of the USSR Armed Forces Comrade Stalin? Who could legally admit him to documents of such a level of secrecy?) Stalin brought his decisions to performers both orally and in writing - in any case, they were subject to unconditional execution.

Draw "arrows" on the secret maps of the General Staff without a direct, clear and precise indication of Stalin - where and to what extent these

"Arrows" have the right to go - only a suicide could. The situation prevailing in the highest echelons of state power absolutely ruled out the possibility of any kind of "amateur activity" not sanctioned by the Master, especially in the sphere of military and foreign policy. Moreover, Stalin's subordinates - even of the highest rank - very often shied away from acting within the framework of the powers granted to them, shifting the burden of decision-making onto the leader. One of the clearest - and most relevant - examples of this is the story of June 1941 with the introduction of the Cover Plan. In the relevant documents, it was directly and unequivocally, in a form that excludes any discrepancies, it was said: "The

cover plan is put into effect upon receipt of an encrypted telegram signed by the People's Commissar of Defense, a member of the Main Military Council, and the Chief of the General Staff." Stalin was neither the people's commissar for defense, nor the chief of the General Staff, nor a member of the GVS (this position was filled by two secretaries of the Central Committee - Zhdanov and Malenkov). Strictly speaking, Stalin simply had nowhere to sign the decision to put the Cover Plan into effect. Nevertheless, on the evening of June 21, when reports were already pouring from the border districts that the Germans were removing wire fences on the border, and the rumble of tank engines was hanging in the air, People's Commissar for Defense Timoshenko and Chief of the General Staff Zhukov, like little children, went to Stalin - ask for permission to perform their direct official duties. The story of the belated enactment of the Cover Plan is a tragedy.

Some other similar stories have the character of a crude tragic farce. So, Marshal of Artillery N. D. Yakovlev (at the beginning of the war, he headed the Main Artillery Directorate with the rank of lieutenant general) in his memoirs tells how in September 1941 one of the emerging cavalry divisions received checkers of pre-revolutionary production, on the blades of which was engraved the inscription "For faith, the king and the fatherland." Having run up the steps of the administrative ladder, the decision of this great issue was submitted to the Supreme Commander for consideration. The saddest thing in this whole ridiculous story is the enthusiasm with which a respected person, a well-deserved

the marshal, in his declining years, talks about the great wisdom shown by Comrade Stalin - he nevertheless allowed the Germans to be cut down "for faith, the tsar and the fatherland." There is not even a shadow of a doubt in the story that in September 1941 it was worth spending a precious resource - the working time of the

Commander-in-Chief - on such nonsense ... Such was the country, such was the system of power in it. After that, talking about some kind of "Zhukov's plan", the development of which he allegedly "started at his own peril and risk," means to sign an absolute misunderstanding of the subject of discussion. And it's not "conspiracy theories." This is the story of a state organized along the lines of a mafia clan. Worse, the main mafiosi had several decades at their disposal to destroy written evidence, and the few that survived are still hidden in the darkness of "special storages" inaccessible to historians. In such a situation, one should not pretend to be surprised (let alone indignant) at the fact that the paper signed by Stalin with the Principal Decision was not found. It is worthy of surprise that some documents and memoirs have survived to this day and could become the object of study.

There are no doubts about the authenticity

Stalin's first, original plan was extremely simple and logical. Yes, you yourself know him, they wrote about this in all school textbooks: "Use acute inter-imperialist contradictions in the interests of the USSR." That is exactly what happened, but with one important clarification. Contradictions can be used in different ways to achieve different goals. Comrade Stalin decided that the interest of the USSR did not lie in the struggle for world peace, but in kindling a protracted destructive war in Europe. That such a decision was made, we can be convinced on the basis of authentic documents. As early as September 2, 1935, Stalin quite clearly expressed the main goals of his foreign policy in a letter to Molotov and Kaganovich: "The old Entente is no more. Instead, two are formed: the entente of Italy and France - on the one hand, and the entente of England and Germany - on the other. The stronger the fight between them, the better for the USSR. We can sell bread and

both so that they can fight. It is not at all profitable for us that one of them immediately smashed the other. It is beneficial for us that their fight be as long as possible, but without an early victory of one over the other. An

interesting document. From it, in particular, it follows that at that time, Comrade Stalin had a rather poor understanding of the international situation - in reality, completely different "entents" (military-political alliances) were being formed in Europe. But the train of thought of the great provocateur is

extremely clear. At the end of the summer of 1939, the general plan began to be embodied in real actions (a treaty with Germany, a secret protocol on the division of spheres of influence in Eastern Europe, a joint military operation with the Wehrmacht to defeat Poland). Actions are well known to us. What was their meaning and purpose? Let us turn again to

quotations from the documents: 1. "The war is going on between two groups of capitalist countries. We don't mind if they fight well and weaken each other. Not bad if the position of the richest capitalist countries (especially England) is shaken by Hitler's hands. Hitler, without realizing it and not wanting it, upsets and undermines the capitalist system. We can maneuver, push one side against the other, so that we better tear ourselves apart. The non-aggression pact helps Germany to some extent. The next moment is to push the other side." 2. "If we conclude a treaty

of mutual assistance with France and Great Britain, Germany will give up Poland and seek modus vivendi with the Western powers. War will be prevented, but in the future events

may take on a dangerous character for the USSR. If we accept Germany's offer to conclude a non-aggression pact with her, she will, of course, attack Poland and the intervention of France and England in this war will become inevitable. Western Europe will be subjected to serious unrest and unrest ... Everything must be done to make this war last as long as possible in order to exhaust the two sides. Adhering to a position of neutrality and waiting in the wings, the USSR will provide assistance to today's Germany, supply it with raw materials and food products.

3. "If the USSR had concluded an agreement with the Western powers, Germany would never have unleashed a war from which a world revolution would develop, for which we have been preparing for a long time. Having concluded an agreement with us, Hitler closed his way to other countries. From the point of view of the economy, it depends only on us, and we will direct its economy in such a way as to lead the warring countries to revolution. A long war will lead to revolution in Germany and France. Our supplies to the Germans will be such that they will remain hungry. As a result of economic agreements, he opened the way for us to the Reich. His war will weaken Europe, which will become our easy prey. The peoples will accept whatever regime comes after the war."

4. "There, in the west, the three largest powers grabbed each other by the throat, when to decide the question of Leningrad, if not in such conditions when [their] hands are busy and we see a favorable situation for them to moment to hit. They are fighting there, but the war is somehow weak, either they are fighting, or they are playing cards. Suddenly they will take and reconcile that not

excluded."

There is not the slightest doubt about the authenticity of texts Nos. 1-4. This is, accordingly, compiled by Georgy Dimitrov (and now stored in the RGASPI) a record of Stalin's speech at a meeting on September 7, 1939 (exactly one week after the start of the war) with the leadership of the executive committee of the Comintern and his speech at

the final meeting of the meeting of the senior command staff

Red Army April 17, 1940. In September, Stalin expresses optimistic expectations ("We can maneuver, push one side against the other, so that they are better torn apart"), in April there are notes of anxiety ("Suddenly they will take and reconcile, which is not excluded"), but the general idea remains unchanged. Much more difficult is the assessment of the authenticity of texts Nos.

2 and 3. Number two is Stalin's so-called speech at the meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee on August 19, 1939. It was first published on November 28, 1939 by the French agency Gavass. The version I cited was published in 1994 by the Russian historian T. Bushuyeva. This text is a "thrill trophy" document - Bushuyeva found it in the Center for the Storage of Historical and

Documentary

collections (former "Special Archive"). There he was listed as captured by the Red Army from the Germans and was, in turn, found by them in the French General Staff, where he allegedly ended up after being seized from the French Communists.

There are reasons to believe

No one has ever seen the true transcript of "Stalin's speech of August 19", there are not even solid grounds to assert that such a speech was delivered. In the "special folders" of the Politburo (more correctly, in what was offered to the public under this name), only one decision refers to the date of August 19, and on an extremely insignificant issue (on granting a deferment from the conscription of the construction workers of the Akmolinsk - Kartaly railway). It looks rather strange. In 1939, the Politburo made an average (including weekends and holidays) of 8 decisions per day. August 1939 was very hot - two dozen issues were considered daily (it should be borne in mind that there were very few meetings as such - the decisions taken by Stalin in a narrow circle of "comrades" selected by him were simply formalized as "politburo decisions"). Why would the party Areopagus on August 19 limit itself to only one third-rate question? One can hardly argue that the "French document" (let's call it that) is not a

transcript, but a retelling of something distorted by multiple translations. What exactly remains to be seen, but the obvious semantic similarity with Georgy Dimitrov's recording, as they say, is striking. Much more interesting and reliable, in my opinion, is document No. 3 (the "Czech document"). This is

a report of a group of Czech anti-fascists about the meeting they had in October 1939 with the head of the Central European Department of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the USSR A. M. Aleksandrov. The document was handed over to the US Consulate General in Prague and then sat safely in the archives of the State Department right up to 1978, when it was first published by the American historian of Czech origin J. Kalvoda. The main advantage of the "Czech document" is clearly fixed dates: the text was received by the Consul General in Prague on November 17, 1939, translated into English

language November 20. This is a very important point - the document, which almost verbatim repeats the wording of "Stalin's speech", was compiled BEFORE the publication of the Tavas agency (November

28). Of course, this can be theoretically explained by the fact that both texts were compiled by the same falsifier. But in this case, the awareness and resourcefulness of this person cannot but cause extreme astonishment. He knows that it was on August 19, 1939 (neither a day earlier nor a day later) that the key events described in the telegram of the German Ambassador to Moscow, Count Schulenburg, took place in the process of concluding the Soviet-German agreement.

So:

"He [Molotov] insists on his opinion that at the moment it is impossible even approximately to determine the time of [Ribbentrop's] trip, since it requires careful preparation ... Molotov, obviously, did not touch my objections, and the first conversation ended with Molotov's statement that he told me the views of the Soviet government and can add nothing more to them. Almost half an hour after the end of the conversation, Molotov told me that he asked me to look for him again in the Kremlin at 16.30. He apologized for putting me in a difficult position and explained that he had made a report to the Soviet

government and was authorized to hand me the draft of the Non-Aggression Pact. Molotov did not explain to me the reasons for the sharp change in his position. I admit that Stalin intervened. Before the publication in 1948 of the German diplomatic correspondence by the US State Department in the well-known

collection of captured documents of the German Foreign Ministry (Nazi - Soviet Relations), no more than a dozen people all over the world knew that it was on August 19, 1939 that Stalin made the "Principal Political Decision" to conclude an agreement with Hitler (and, which is very likely, he informed a narrow circle of his close associates about him). The "Czech document" contains the words of A. M. Alexandrov: "... we cannot afford Germany to lose." This phrase has a long and quite reliable history. Stalin himself

said it late in the evening of August 23, 1939, during a conversation with Ribbentrop. On October 18, 1939, Ribbentrop decided to use this phrase in his public speech and, as a loyal partner

Stalin, sent the text to Moscow in advance for approval. In Ribbentrop's version, Stalin's words sounded like this: "The Soviet Union is interested in Germany, which is its neighbor, being strong, and in the event of a test of strength between Germany and Western democracies, the interests of the USSR and Germany will, of course, coincide. The Soviet Union will never want to see Germany in a difficult situation."

Comrade Stalin was sympathetic to the desire of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Third Reich to publicly intimidate the Anglo-French plutocrats and only asked for a slight softening of the wording. In the agreed version, Stalin's words sounded like this: "The Soviet Union is interested in the existence of a strong Germany. The Soviet Union therefore cannot approve of the actions of the Western powers, which create conditions for the weakening of Germany and put her in a difficult position."

Until the publication of 1948, no one knew about this correspondence, how did the "forger" manage to convey Stalin's thoughts

so close to the text? The insidious "falsifier" acts very cunningly: he acquaints the world community with one text with the help of the leading French news agency "Gavas", while referring to nothing less than the speech of Stalin himself. He does not show the other text, referring to the statements of a middle-ranking Soviet official, to the press, but transfers it to the Consulate General of a country far (not only geographically, but at that time also politically) from Europe. All this is very

strange. Much more logical seems to me the hypothesis that the "Czech document" is quite reliable and authentic, and the "French" - the so-called speech of Stalin - also did not arise from scratch, but is a retelling of the instructions that the leaders of the Comintern received in Moscow on a very high level.

If we replace the ritual word "revolution", inevitable for conversations in the Comintern, with the words "devastation, chaos and anarchy", much more adequate to the situation, then Stalin's simple plan, like everything brilliant, will appear before us in all its glory. In the autumn of 1939, it was Germany that seemed to Stalin the weakest side.

conflict, it was to her that he decided to provide a variety of political, psychological, economic assistance so that the longed-for all-European war would not stop at its very beginning due to the rapid defeat of Germany.

Toothy "manilovism"

As simple and understandable as the general geopolitical plan, the military-strategic component of "Stalin's Plan No. 1" seems to us just as vague and indefinite. Where, in what operational

areas was it supposed to expand the "world front of socialism"? An amazing document (mostly amazing

because it was not destroyed in time) was preserved in the bowels of the Russian State Military Archive. On March 5, 1940, the Deputy Head of the Special Department of the Main Directorate of State Security of the NKVD of the USSR, Major of State Security Osetrov, wrote a memorandum to People's Commissar of Defense Voroshilov: "On January 31, Commander of the Siberian Military

District Army Commander 2nd Rank Kalinin made a report on the international situation in the district house of the Red Army. Kalinin announced the inevitability of a big war in the spring of 1940, in which on the one hand the USSR would stand in a bloc with Germany, Japan and Italy against the Anglo-French bloc. Military operations with England, France and their allies will be protracted."

In the last lines of the memorandum, the deputy chief "special officer" of the NKVD of the USSR makes an extremely strange conclusion: "Many commanders consider the speech of comrade. Kalinin is confused and the coverage of the international situation in this form is

politically harmful. How would you like to understand such vagueness and caution in the assessment? Since when did the "specialists" begin to hide behind the "opinion of many commanders" - especially after the NKVD successfully imprisoned and shot many

thousands of Red Army commanders? It can be assumed that on March 5, 1940, Comrade Osetrov himself still did not really know how to now "cover the inter

situation", with whom and against whom the Soviet Union will fight, but just in case, I decided to inform Comrade Voroshilov in order to relieve myself of any responsibility. Judging by the consequences - on June 4, 1940, S. A. Kalinin received the rank of lieutenant general and continued to safely command his district - a report to the commanders of the Red Army with open statements about the "inevitability of war against the Anglo-French bloc", and even in alliance with by Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, was not at all regarded as a vicious slander against the invariably peaceful foreign policy of the USSR. On May 11, 1940, Divisional Commissar Shabalin submitted a

memorandum to the head of the Main Political Directorate of the Red Army, Mekhlis, in which he recalled with great concern "the need to carefully review the organization of units and formations of the Red Army from the point of view of their readiness to wage war in the Middle East theater."

On June 21, 1940, Colonel-General Pavlov reported to People's Commissar of Defense Marshal Timoshenko his thoughts on the possible use of the armed forces of the three annexed Baltic countries: and the Estonian armies - outside the BOVO, approximately - against the Romanians, Afghans and Japanese. In the near future.

Not only Soviet generals, but also admirals were preparing for the war against England and its allies. In the "Note of the Air Force Commander of the Black Sea Fleet on the plan of operations of the Air Force of the Black Sea Fleet" (the document was drawn up no earlier than March 27, 1940), we read: "Probable enemy: England, France, Romania, Turkey. The tasks of the Air Force are: to strike at ships in the waters of the Sea of Marmara, the Bosphorus, laying minefields in the Bosphorus ... "

The report of the commander of the Black Sea Fleet Air Force to the Main Naval Staff on the plan for the development of aviation of the Black Sea Fleet for 1940–1941 suggested the following development of events:

"The tasks of aviation in theaters of military operations: 1. The Black Sea. Delivering powerful bombing strikes on bases: Constanta, Izmail, Varna.

2. Aegean Sea: Thessaloniki, Smyrna.

3. Mediterranean Sea: Alexandria, Haifa, Suez Canal, about. Malta, Brindisi. By

systematic strikes on the Suez Canal, deprive England and the Mediterranean states of the possibility of normal operation of this communication.

In the same months of the spring of 1940, the Main Directorate of the Air Force of the Red Army prepared a document on 19 pages entitled "Description of routes in India No. 1 (Barochil, Chitral passes) and No. 4 (Killio, Gilchit, Srinagor passes). On 34 pages, a "List of military-industrial facilities" of Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and India was compiled. Almost all of these countries are colonies or semi-colonies of Great Britain and France. The huge attention paid to the southern

theater of operations did not mean at all that the Soviet headquarters forgot about the north of Europe. So, the chief of staff of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, Rear Admiral Panteleev, in a memorandum to the Main Naval Headquarters, suggested the following on July 5, 1940: "The capture of the Aland Islands

in all cases of the situation in the Baltic and immediately. The offensive of our ground forces to the north from the Hanko base and to the west from Vyborg (translated from Russian into Russian, this means an attack on Helsinki. - **M.S.**). Immediately, in the same year, get the Aland Islands and the possibility of real control over all Finnish bases in the Gulf of Finland by any means - up to war.

Rear Admiral Nesvitsky, commander of the KBF squadron, did not lag behind the senior commander. On July 10, he sent a memorandum to the Main Naval Headquarters with a proposal to "resolve the issue of the independent existence of Sweden and Finland in favor of the USSR and make the Baltic Sea an inland sea." In September

1940, "the question of the independent existence of Sweden and Finland" was already quite concrete: the commander of the KBF Air Force, Major General Ermachenkov, prepared for the commander of the KBF, Vice Admiral Tributs, "A note on the plan of operations for 1940." The tasks of the fleet aviation were formulated there as follows:

"With independent actions of combat aviation of the KBF Air Force and the PribOVO Air Force, destroy ships and transports at sea and prevent the enemy fleet from being based in: Stockholm, Karlskrona, Norrköping, Fore, Helsinki, Abo, Raumo, Pori, Memel, Danzig, Gdynia, Zaenets, Steting, Kiel (the Baltic ports of Sweden, Finland, German-occupied Poland and Germany are listed. - **M.S.**). In cooperation with the fleet, the Air Force ensures the capture of the Åland Islands through air strikes and airborne landings. Preparations for the implementation of such impressive plans were carried out in various directions, including in the area of intelligence. Here, for example, is what Captain Semishin,

head of the intelligence department of the KBF Air Force Headquarters, writes to Major Klimashin, head of the 2nd Department of the First Department of the Navy Aviation Headquarters:

"I am reporting on the state of reconnaissance training of the Headquarters of the KBF Air Force on August

1, 40. Target cases continue to start and are replenished with incoming material, in particular, the Stockholm object has been multiplied in 20 copies. and sent out piecemeal. Kalmar and Karlskrona facilities are being developed. In total, the Air Force has opened: 270 target cases, of which 91 in Sweden, 90 in Germany, and 36 in Finland. On August 14, Major Klimashin sends

to the captain

Semishin the following instructions:

"By September 1, 1940, report - for what purposes the cases in Finland, Sweden are formalized and whether they are in all regiments. At the same time, tell us whether you received the object "Stockholm" from the intelligence department of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet and what shortcomings it has. Speed up the processing of cases in order to finish them as soon as possible.

Of course, aviation was not the only and not even the most important tool for "solving the issue of the independent existence of Sweden" or blocking the Suez Canal. It is somehow customary for us to forget about the grandiose program for the construction of the Navy, the implementation of which began in the USSR in the late 1930s. In 1938, it was decided to transfer 15 (!!!) battleships, 35 heavy and 20 light cruisers, 145 leaders and destroyers to the Navy within 10 years. Later, this program was somewhat shortened.

- in seven years it was necessary to build "only" 6 battleships, 21 light cruisers, 98 leaders and destroyers. In

the list of military equipment, equipment and weapons purchased in 1939-1940 in Germany, almost half were numerous samples of naval artillery (including special corrosion-resistant guns for submarines), mine and torpedo weapons, sonar instruments, carrier-based aircraft - scouts and catapults for launching them, propeller and turbine shafts, marine diesels, ship armor steel, and finally, the latest cruiser Lutzow, then completed in Leningrad. Of the 25 billion rubles allocated in 1940 according to the plan for orders for weapons and military equipment, almost a

quarter (5.8 billion) was allocated to the People's Commissariat of the Navy. The estimated cost of one battleship of the "Soviet Union" type ("Project 23") was set in 1940 at 1.180 million rubles. With all the reservations about the fact that the price in the conditions of an anti-market

socialist economy is a rather conditional category, the following should still be noted: one "Soviet Union" had to cost the treasury the price of 80 thousand anti-tank "forty-five", or 3 thousand medium tanks T- 34, or 3.2 thousand SB light bombers. Fortunately, only a "pathetic" 600 million rubles were spent on the construction of battleships (not counting R&D costs). In July 1941, all work on the creation of battleships and heavy cruisers was immediately stopped, and their hulls were mothballed - these cyclopean monsters were completely unsuitable for armed confrontation with Germany.

By the beginning of World War II, the Navy of the great maritime power of Great Britain had 58 submarines, the Italian Navy - 68, Japan - 63, Germany -57. The fleet of the huge continental country of the USSR had (though not by September 1939, but by June 1941) 267 submarines. Question: which country's naval blockade was supposed to be carried out by this submarine armada?

A number of aviation historians (V. Belokon, A. Stepanov) drew attention to the obvious "anti-English" direction in the development of the Soviet Air Force at the turn of the 30s and 40s. Already having a bomber in mass production and in service with combat units

DB-3f, capable of flying 3,300 km with a bomb load of one ton (a similar indicator for the best German bomber at that time, the He-111, was no more than 2,700 km), Stalin in January 1939 set the designers the task of creating a bomber capable of overcoming 5,000 km. For what? To what frontiers were the "Stalin's falcons" to fly? From Minsk to Berlin - 1000 km, from Minsk to Hamburg - 1200 km, from Kyiv to Munich - 1400 km, from Vladivostok to Tokyo - 1200 km. The range of the serial DB-3f was quite enough to bombard any of the named targets. But for a strike on the British Isles, a bomber with a much greater range was really required (from Minsk to London - 1900 km, to Manchester - 2000 km).

All this "Manilovism", sweet dreams about the transformation of the Baltic into an "inland sea" and the passes of Killio, Gilchit, Srinagor on the way to the Indian Ocean crumbled to smithereens in the summer of 1940. Within one month, France was defeated. The English Expeditionary Corps barely got away, leaving mountains of heavy weapons on the coastal sand of Dunkirk. The newborn Wehrmacht with dizzying speed turned into the most powerful army in the world. Much of continental Western Europe came under Hitler's control. This stunning reality forced Stalin to radically change the strategic plan for the war. Unlike "Plan No. 1", the content of which can only be guessed from individual bits of information, today it is possible to reconstruct "Plan No. 2" in sufficient detail. In the first half of the 90s, the following

documents were declassified and published in a number of collections (in particular, the two-volume "Russia. XX century. Documents. 1941", well-known to specialists and amateurs, called "robin" by the color of the cover) the following documents:

- memorandum of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR and the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army in the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks to I.V. Stalin and V.M. later than August 16, 1940);

- a document with the same name, but with a number (No. 103202) and the exact date of signing (September 18, 1940);

- memorandum of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR and the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army in the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks to I. V. Stalin and V. M. Molotov No. 103313 (the document begins with the words "I report for your approval the main conclusions from your instructions given on October 5, 1940 • when considering strategic deployment plans.

of the Armed Forces of the USSR for 1941", in connection with which it is usually referred to as the "refined October strategic deployment plan"); - memorandum of

the chief of staff of the Kyiv Special Military District (OVO) by decision of the military council of the Southwestern Front according to the deployment plan for 1940 (no number, no later than December 1940); - memorandum of the People's Commissar of Defense

of the USSR and the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army in the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks to I. V. Stalin and V. M. Molotov "An updated plan for the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces of the USSR in the West and East" (no number) dated March 11, 1940 of the year; - a

directive from the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR and the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army to the commander of the troops of the Western OVO to develop a plan for the operational deployment of the district's troops (no number, April 1941);

- considerations on the plan for the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union in case of war with Germany and its allies (no number, not earlier than May 15, 1941).

"Find Five Differences"

Strictly speaking, there is plenty of information to study. Historians have at their disposal five variants of the general plan for the strategic deployment of the Red Army and materials on the operational plans of the two most important fronts: the Southwestern and the Western. What conclusions can we draw from the available documents? Firstly, there was an operational plan for the war against Germany, and many

months of work on it had been going on since at least August 1940, without any regard for the Non-Aggression Pact.

It is strange that this should be emphasized, but other domestic propagandists, in their "zeal beyond reason", even reached the assertion that the "naive and gullible" Stalin replaced the development of military operational plans with loving looking at Ribbentrop's signature. Secondly, starting from August

1940, in the strategic deployment plans mentioned above, England was no longer mentioned as a possible enemy of the USSR, Germany was invariably named as the main enemy, which Italy, Hungary, Romania and Finland could allegedly support. Thirdly, all the plans for the strategic deployment of the Red Army that have

been declassified to this day are actually one and the same document, only slightly changing from one version to another. There is not only a semantic, but also a clear textual similarity of all planes. All documents, without exception, are a description of the plan for the preparation and conduct of a strategic offensive operation outside the state borders of the USSR. All the toponymy of the theater of alleged military operations used in the documents consists of the names of East Prussian, Polish and Slovak cities and rivers:

"In cooperation with the 4th Army of the Western Front, inflict a decisive defeat on the Lublin-Sandomierz enemy grouping and reach the river. Wisla. In the future, strike in the direction of Kielce-Petrokov and Krakow, capture the Kielce-Petrokov region and reach the river. Pilica and the upper course of the river. Oder." "The immediate

strategic task is to defeat, in cooperation with the 4th Army of the Western Front, the German armed forces in the areas of Lublin, Tomaszow, Kielce, Radom and Rzeszow, Jaslo, Krakow and reach the front of the river on the 30th day of the operation. Pilica, Petrokov, Oppeln, Neustadt, cutting off Germany from her southern allies..."

"The main forces of the Southwestern Front, in cooperation with the left wing of the Western Front, strike and decisively defeat the Sandomierz-Krakow enemy grouping in Lublin-Radom, capture Krakow and Warsaw and go to the front Warsaw, Lodz, Kreutzburg, Oppeln. "With the transition of the armies of the South-Western Front

to the offensive with a blow from the left wing of the front in the general direction to Sedlec, Radom

to help the Southwestern Front to break the enemy's Lublin-Radom grouping. The immediate task of the front is to capture the area of Sedlec, Lukov and capture the crossings across the river. Vistula, in the future, keep in mind actions on Radom with the aim of completely encircling the Lublin grouping of the enemy in cooperation with the Southwestern Front.

"Deal the main blow with the forces of the Southwestern Front in the direction of Krakow, Katowice, cutting off Germany from its southern allies; deliver an auxiliary blow by the left wing of the Western Front in the direction of Sedlec, Demblin in order to pin down the Warsaw grouping and assist the Southwestern Front in defeating the enemy's Lublin grouping. Above are excerpts from five

different documents (plans). What is called, "find the five differences." This obvious unity of the concept (and even details) of all variants of the plan for a strategic offensive operation conducted west of the USSR state border shows the absolute absurdity of the wording "Zhukov's plan", "Zhukov's May plan". The plan for the strategic deployment of the Red Army could be exclusively and only "Stalin's plan." In the period from August 1940 to May 1941, People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR S. K. Timoshenko and three consecutive chiefs of the General Staff - B. M. Shaposhnikov, K. A. Meretskov and G. K. Zhukov worked on the development of various versions of this plan . The May (1941) version did not fundamentally differ from its predecessors.

Direction of the main attack

Only the August (1940) document makes the choice of the direction of deployment of the main forces of the Red Army dependent on the probable plans of the enemy ("assuming that the main attack of the Germans will be directed north of the mouth of the San River, it is also necessary to have the main forces of the Red Army deployed north of Polissya"). With a big stretch, this logic can also be called "planning a counterstrike." Nevertheless, subsequent versions of the plan establish strategic deployment solely on military-operational and political considerations.

"Conveniences" for the advancing Soviet formations. The assessment of the probable plans of the German command (deployment by the Germans of the most powerful grouping to the north or south of the swamps of Polesie) changes several times, but this does not affect the choice of the direction

of the main attack of the Red Army. More specifically: starting from October 1940, all variants of the operational plan provide for the deployment of the main forces of the Red Army south of the Pripyat River, in the region of the so-called Lvov salient. The drafters of the documents justify the choice of just such a deployment scheme (and, accordingly, the rejection of the "northern option") by purely offensive considerations. In the March (1941) version of the strategic deployment plan, this was formulated as follows:

"The deployment of the main forces of the Red Army in the West with the grouping of the main forces against East Prussia and in the Warsaw direction raises serious fears that the struggle on this front can lead to protracted battles, will tie up our main forces, will not give the desired and quick effect, will speed up the entry The Balkan countries are at war against us. The most advantageous is

the deployment of our main forces south of the river. Pripyat in order to defeat the main forces of the Germans with powerful blows on Lublin, Radom and in the Krakow direction and, in the very first stage of the war, cut Germany off from the Balkan countries, deprive it of important economic bases and decisively influence the Balkan countries in matters of their participation in the war against us ."

The attack on Krakow-Katowice was invariably called only "the first strategic task." The March (1941) plan already explicitly sets out the directions of subsequent strikes:

"The further strategic goal for the main forces of the Red Army, depending on the situation, can be set: to develop an operation through Poznan to Berlin, or to act southwest on Prague and Vienna, or an attack in the north on Torun and Danzig in order to bypass East Prussia." Nobody has yet found

any other plans for the strategic deployment of the Red Army, apart from those listed above. Having at their disposal all the archives of Russia, opponents of the hypothesis of Viktor Suvorov (Vladimir Rezun) have not been able to over the past 18 years

present to the "city and the world" not a single document in which the beginning (at least the beginning!) of the Soviet-German war was planned in the form of a strategic defensive operation on the territory of the USSR. Over the past 18 years - not found. In previous years, they were not going to look. Before the release of the Icebreaker, Soviet historians stated without a shadow of embarrassment that "the offensive nature of the planned strategic actions influenced the location of positions and troops. the plan for strategic deployment and the construction of operational groupings of troops to a greater extent reflected offensive goals. True, such confessions were always accompanied by an on-duty clause that "due to an incorrect assessment of the situation, an erroneous decision was unjustifiably made."

Two games

At the beginning of January 1941, the main ideas and decisions of the operational plan for the war against Germany and its allies were worked out during two operational-strategic map games conducted by the General Staff of the Red Army under the general leadership of People's Commissar of Defense Marshal Timoshenko. Four marshals and 49 generals were involved in these games - deputy people's commissars of defense and chief of the General Staff, commanders and chiefs of staff of the western military districts, heads (and their deputies) of main departments and inspector generals of military branches. In a word - the entire senior command staff of the Red Army, those who in the near

future were to lead it into battle. For more than half a century, the materials of the January (1941) operational strategic games were hidden under the heading "Top Secret". Pure secrecy, however, did not prevent Soviet historians from telling the people "the whole truth" (this "truth" was even reflected in one epoch-making film - there Zhukov reproaches the commander of the Western Front, doomed to reprisal, D. G. Pavlov, that he - he did not draw the proper conclusions from the January "game", during which the future Grand Marshal, playing for the "Western", surrounded and defeated the "Eastern" in Belarus). Moreover, even after the declassification and detailed publication of the materials of the "games

(see Nos. 7 and 8 of the Military Historical Journal for 1993), the Krasnaya Zvezda columnist V. Moroz writes the following:

"It is known that the General Staff of the Red Army was not even involved in operational-strategic games of this (offensive. - **M.S.**) orientation. History knows a staff game of a different content. Our best strategists, the most trained operators, wondered what the German attack would turn out for the USSR, and, as you know, Stalin was not reassured, they could not repel the blow, even in the game "(" Red Star " on January 13, 2000). In reality, two games were played. In the first, the "northern option" was worked out - the main blow from the Bialystok ledge and Lithuania to East Prussia. Conditional hostilities unfolded

on the territory of the enemy, the "eastern" reached Allenstein (now Olsztyn, Poland) and Rastenburg (now Ketrzyn, Poland), but in general the offensive tasks set were not solved (neither to surround the main forces of the "western", nor to reach Vistula and Danzig failed). The offensive in the wooded and swampy area (the Masurian Lakes, sadly remembered from the First World War) bogged down. The game once again confirmed the futility of the strategic northern offensive operation.

option"

In the final game, the "Western", commanded by Zhukov, really tried to seize the initiative and delivered two blows to the flank and rear of the "Eastern" advancing on Allenstein, while in the area of Lomza, Zambrov, Brest, conditional military operations were transferred to 20-40 km east of the state border. To the catastrophe that actually occurred in Belarus in June 41, this breakthrough of the "western" to Lomzha and Zambrow is similar in the same way as

domestic cat looks like a lion.

During the second "game", the "southern version" already adopted and approved in October 1940 as the main one (by the way, the composition of the "eastern" group in the second game was much larger than in the first) was worked out. Having deployed the main forces on the Lvov ledge, the "eastern" within five weeks were to go to the front of the Vistula River, Krakow, Budapest, Timisoara, Craiova, that is, during an offensive up to 250–300 km deep, occupy southern Poland, Slovakia, most of Hungary and Romania.

The second ("southern") game deserves special attention for a number of reasons. Firstly, even the minimal "fig leaves" of ostentatious peacefulness were discarded in her scenario: the offensive of the "Eastern" did not even begin from the state border line, but from the Rzeszow-Tarnow region - already from the territory of Poland occupied by the Germans, the so-called General Government. It is appropriate to recall here that in the Plan for covering the mobilization, concentration and deployment of the Kiev OVO troops, developed later, in May-June 1941, the task was set already at the stage of deployment of the main grouping "to be ready, at the direction of the High Command, to deliver swift strikes to defeat enemy groupings, the transfer of hostilities to its territory and the capture of advantageous lines. Secondly (and this is extremely important for understanding how

Stalin and his entourage assessed the combat effectiveness of the Red Army at that time), during the game, the "Eastern" solved four (!) Large-scale tasks simultaneously: defeating the main enemy forces in the Krakow-Katowice area, deep breakthrough on Budapest, stubborn defense in two directions of enemy counterattacks (on Kovel and on Stryi), encirclement of the strike force of the "Western", which crossed the Dniester in the Khotyn region and advanced on Volochisk - Proskurov. The "Eastern" brilliantly solved all these tasks, being inferior to the enemy in the number of rifle divisions (81 versus 100) and having a very small (30%) superiority in aviation (only in the number of tanks, the "Eastern" had a threefold advantage). Thirdly, the chronology of the game was set very remarkably. Not first, second. tenth

day", and from 8 to 20 August. And not just the last summer month, but a very specific year - 1941. This fact looks rather strange: if the exact indication of a certain month can still be explained by the fact that in order to plan conditional hostilities, it was necessary to correctly take into account natural climatic conditions, daylight hours, sunrise and sunset times, then why was it necessary to name the year?

In a year or two...

Here we turn to one of the most difficult questions of the prehistory of the Great Patriotic War. If the very idea of a grandiose offensive operation is clear and discussion is possible only in order to clarify individual details, then it is not possible to establish the exact date of the planned transition of the Red Army to the offensive based on declassified documents. The assumption expressed by Viktor Suvorov and Igor Bunich that Stalin intended to launch the operation at the moment when the German troops landed in the British Isles has not yet found any confirmation in the available documents. There are no words, the hypothesis is beautiful, but, alas, the "beauty of the idea" alone is not enough for the historian.

Big questions are raised by the memorandum dated March 11, 1941 ("An updated plan for the strategic deployment of the USSR Armed Forces in the West and in the East"), where on the reverse side of the 27th page in a thin pencil, neat "beaded" handwriting (presumably by the then head of the Operational Directorate General Staff N. F. Vatutin) the phrase is inscribed: "The offensive to begin 12.6". This phrase has nothing to do with the context (it appears after the description of the task assigned to the "left wing of the main grouping of the Southwestern Front") and generally seems out of place in a document where all chronological marks are expressed in conditional dates "tied" to the first day of the operation ("on the 3rd day of the operation, capture Sedlec with moving parts and on the 5th day the crossings on the Vistula

River"). A careful analysis of the document does not give grounds to assume that the phrase "offensive to begin on June 12" refers to June 12, 1941. The logic of reasoning here is very simple - most of the mechanized (tank) formations mentioned in the March (1941) plan simply did not exist in reality. So, according to the plan, three mechanized corps were included in the 4th Army of the Western Front. With the same thin pencil, their numbers are also inscribed - 13, 14 and 17th. But at that time, a decisive offensive by the forces of these formations was out of the question. According to the plans approved in February 1941, the 14th mechanized corps completed its formation only at the beginning of 1942. As for the 13th and 17th MK, they were at all at the very early stage of formation, and even by the end of 1941 they

the planned staffing of tanks was supposed to be about 25-30%. In general, the

program for the creation of gigantic armored forces launched in February 1941, which provides for the formation of 30 mechanized corps of a thousand tanks each and the arming of this monstrous armored horde with "new types of tanks" (KV and T-34), could not be completed before the end of 1942 (if not later). No reasonable person - and Stalin was no doubt an extremely cautious person - would have embarked on such a grand "overhaul" in the months before the start of the Great War. It can be assumed that in March 1941 this moment was attributed by him to the beginning of the summer ("June 12") of 1942 or even 1943.

"There are two wills in the field," says an old Russian proverb. The dramatic development of the events of the Second World War did not allow Stalin to prepare for the war in Europe thoroughly, "with feeling, with sense, with the arrangement." At some point in the spring of 1941, Moscow realized that it would be possible to strike first only if the Red Army launched an offensive no later than August-September 1941. In this new reality, the top military-political leadership of the Soviet Union had to hastily correct the plans developed earlier. Strictly speaking, "Stalin's third plan" from the

point of view of the operational plan was no different from "Plan No. 2". As before, it was envisaged to conduct a large-scale offensive operation outside the state borders of the USSR. The May (1941) "Considerations on the Plan of Strategic Deployment" completely repeat all previous versions of the war plan against Germany in terms of tasks, directions of the main attacks, timing and boundaries.

Preempt the enemy

Only one, but very significant, new point appears in the text of the Considerations. Namely: "Germany has the ability to warn us in the deployment and deliver a surprise strike." That is why the developers of the plan insistently suggest "in no case give the initiative of action to the German

command, preempt the enemy and attack the German army at the moment when it will be in the deployment stage and will not have time to organize the front and the interaction of the military branches.

I emphasize once again that there are no grounds for reasoning about the special "aggressiveness" of the May (1941) "Considerations": the intention to get ahead of the enemy and "under no circumstances give him the initiative to act" is just an elementary requirement of common sense and the basics of operational art. The advantage of the first blow is too serious a thing to freely give it to the opponent. The only thing that is fundamentally new is that in May 1941, the Soviet command was no longer so sure that he would be able to do this, and therefore asked Stalin to immediately take all the necessary measures, "without which it is impossible to deliver a sudden strike against the enemy both from the air, so on earth."

When did such a sharp turn in the assessment of military strategic situation?

Oddly enough, but we can determine this point in time with an accuracy of one or two months, which in the absence of direct documentary evidence can be considered an excellent result: not earlier than April 6 and not later than May 24, 1941.

April 6, 1941 is one of the most mysterious days in the history of World War II. Recall the main outline of events. On the night of March 26-27, a military coup took place in Belgrade, inspired by either the British or Soviet intelligence services. The new government of Yugoslavia, General Dusan Simovic, announced its intention to give a firm rebuff to German claims and asked the Soviet Union for help. On April 3 (that is, only a week after the coup), the Yugoslav delegation was already negotiating in Moscow on the conclusion of a treaty of friendship and cooperation with Stalin himself. Despite the fact that Germany, through its ambassador Schulenburg, brought to the

attention of V. M. Molotov Berlin's opinion that "the moment for concluding an agreement with Yugoslavia was chosen unsuccessfully and causes an undesirable impression", at 2.30 am on April 6, 1941, the Soviet-Yugoslav agreement was signed. A few hours later, the Luftwaffe planes were subjected to fierce

bombardment of Belgrade, and German troops invaded the territory of Yugoslavia. The Soviet Union did nothing to help the friendly state. On April 6, at

about 4 pm Moscow time, Molotov received Schulenburg and, after listening to the official report on the offensive of the Wehrmacht in the Balkans, limited himself to a melancholy remark: "It is extremely sad that, despite all efforts, the expansion of the war, thus, turned out to be inevitable."

What was it? Why was Stalin so defiantly "teasing" Hitler, having no intention (and no practical possibility!) to come to the aid of Yugoslavia? For many years, this question has remained at the center of the discussion of historians. In the meantime, one thing can be said with complete certainty - after April 6, 1941, the external (let's mentally emphasize this word with three bold lines) Soviet-German relations change dramatically. Moreover, in a purely unilateral manner: ~~Moscow~~ **Moscow** begins defiantly and obsessively "to be friends" with Berlin and its allies.

"Let's stay friends"

On April 13, 1941, a major event of world significance took place: the Neutrality Pact between the USSR and Japan was signed in Moscow, an agreement that freed Stalin's hands for action in the West. On the same day, there was a small episode at the Moscow railway station, which, however, attracted the close attention of politicians and diplomats on all continents. In the report, which the German Ambassador on the same day marked "Urgent! Secret! sent to Berlin, this strange episode was described as follows:

"Obviously unexpectedly for both the Japanese and the Russians, Stalin and Molotov suddenly appeared and in an emphatically friendly manner greeted Matsuoka (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan. - M.S.) **and** the Japanese who were present there and wished them a pleasant journey. Then Stalin loudly asked about me and, finding me, came up, put his arm around my shoulders and said: "We must remain friends, and you must now do everything for this!". Stalin then turned to the acting German military attache.

Colonel Krebs and, having previously made sure that he was a German, told him: "We will remain friends with you in any case."

Hot hugs at the door of the car soon complemented other, equally demonstrative actions. Embassies and diplomatic missions of countries defeated and occupied by the Wehrmacht were closed in Moscow. The embassy of the same Yugoslavia was no exception, on the friendship agreement with which, as they say, "the ink has not yet dried." In May 1941, the Soviet Union obediently recognized the pro-German government of Iraq, which came to power through a military coup. All issues of economic cooperation with the Third Reich were resolved in the most benevolent spirit. The memorandum of the German Foreign Ministry dated May 15, 1941 noted: "Negotiations with the First Deputy People's Commissar for

Foreign Trade of the USSR were held in a very constructive spirit. I have the impression that we could present economic demands to Moscow, even going beyond the scope of the agreement of January 10, 1941. At the present time, the amount of raw material stipulated by the contract is delivered by the Russians punctually, despite the fact that it costs them great effort; contracts, especially with regard to grain, are carried out remarkably."

The aged diplomat Schulenburg was completely delighted and fascinated by the friendliness of the hospitable Moscow hosts. (By the way, in November 1944, the former German ambassador to the USSR was executed for participating in a conspiracy against Hitler, so his "naive gullibility" might not be as naive as it seems.) On May 24, 1941, in another report to Berlin, he writes:

"That this foreign policy is primarily aimed at preventing a clash with Germany is proved by the position taken by the Soviet government in recent weeks, the tone of the Soviet press, which treats all events concerning Germany in an unobjectionable manner, and the observance of economic agreements."

Mystery May 24

On the same day, May 24, 1941, a many-hour meeting was held in Stalin's office, the participants of which, in addition to the owner himself, were: - Deputy head

of government and People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs V. M. Molotov,

- People's Commissar of Defense S.

K. Timoshenko, - Chief of the General Staff of the Red

Army G. K. Zhukov, - Chief of the Operational Directorate of the

General Staff N. F. Vatutin, - Head of the Main Directorate of the Red

Army Air

Force P. F. Zhigarev, - Commanders of the five Western border troops districts, members of military councils and

commanders of the air forces of these military districts. There were no other equally representative meetings of the top military-political leadership of the USSR - neither a few months before May 24, 1941, nor after

this date until the start of the war. Here, in fact, is the whole "array of information". Nothing more is known to this day. Official Soviet (as well as modern Russian) historiography did not utter a word about the subject of discussion and the decisions taken on May 24. Nothing was reported about them in their memoirs by the few people who lived to see Stalin's death, who were in his office that day. Declassified at the beginning of the 21st century, the Special folders of the minutes of the meetings of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks for May 1941 also do not contain even the slightest mention of this meeting.

And only Marshal A.M. Vasilevsky, in the manuscript of a newspaper article that has lain in archival silence for almost 27 years, recalls: transferred by the General Staff to the command and headquarters of the respective military districts. If we assume that Vasilevsky's memory did not fail him, and it was during the meeting on May 24, 1941 that the specific content of the operational plan of the war was

brought, "as far as it concerns them", to the direct executors - the commands of the border military districts (future fronts), then the range of "possible dates"

the beginning of the operation is narrowed to almost two months: from mid-July to the end of August 1941.

Let us briefly explain this rather obvious conclusion. In order to conduct a large-scale offensive operation (with an offensive depth of 300 kilometers already at the stage of solving the "first strategic task") against the German land army, the strongest at that time in the world, it was necessary to carry out a huge set of interrelated measures, called in military language "mobilization, concentration and deployment of troops". At the same time, to successfully solve all the problems associated with the implementation of these measures, it took time, and a lot of it.

So, according to the calculations contained in the pre-war plans of the Soviet command, the mobilization and concentration of troops was assigned from eight (for the Northern Front, that is, the Leningrad Military District) to thirty (for the South-Western Front, that is, the Kiev OVO) days. However, these deadlines refer to the situation when the railways are transferred to a special "military transportation regime". While maintaining, in order to ensure maximum secrecy, the mode of operation of steel lines in peacetime (namely, this option was chosen in reality), the duration of the concentration inevitably increases. Thus, in the event of the start of strategic deployment at the end of May, the Red Army could be fully prepared for hostilities no earlier than the first

decades of July.

It makes sense to compare this chronology with the schedule according to which preparations for war were going on on the other side of the future front. In December 1940, Hitler informed his generals: "I will give the order for the strategic deployment of armed forces against the Soviet Union, if necessary, eight weeks before the scheduled start date of the operation." Hitler fulfilled this promise ("eight weeks"): the date of the invasion of the territory of the USSR (June 22, 1941) was finally set and brought to the attention of the Wehrmacht high command on April 30 - 52 days before the German troops crossed the Soviet border.

Counting the same eight weeks from the date of the meeting in the Kremlin on May 24, 1941, we find ourselves on July 19 - a completely realistic date.

completion of all measures for the strategic deployment of the Red Army. We note,

by the way, that in the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, in the archival fund of enemy captured documents, a certain analytical note is stored (it was probably intended for the propaganda services of the Wehrmacht). And it describes the reasons that prompted the German "leader" to start a war against the Soviet Union (TsAMO, f. 500, op. 12462, d. 596, l. army in Lutsk" (Western Ukraine), according to which the beginning of the offensive of the Red Army was supposedly scheduled for July 25, 1941.

Mid-July 1941 is the "lower limit" of the possible range of dates for the start of a strategic offensive operation. The upper limit is easy to determine based on an assessment of the natural and climatic conditions of the East European theater of operations.

The main blow, as already noted (VPK, No. 30, 2010), was to be delivered in the direction of Lvov - Krakow with the further development of the offensive on Poznan - Berlin or Prague - Vienna. The planned duration of the solution of the "first strategic task" was 25-30 days.

But not everything in the war goes according to plan, and besides, the successful solution of the "first task" was to be followed by the next, even deeper blow. However, even in southern Poland, Slovakia and Hungary there is winter - damp, slushy, with rain, fog and sleet. For the actions of aviation and motorized troops, this is much worse than the "normal" Russian winter with severe frosts that turn all road directions into a "paved road" and fetter lakes and rivers with an ice "bridge". Dry and warm weather lasts in the south of Eastern Europe usually until October. Thus, the end of August - the beginning of September could be considered the deadline after which it would be too risky to launch a large-scale offensive in southern Poland and the Balkans.

Further clarification of the chronology of the "Stalin's third plan" will become possible only after a radical change in the volume and composition of the "source base" at the disposal of

Russian historians. For now, it makes sense to discuss only one, but a very important question: maybe the traditional version of Soviet historiography is not so far from the truth? Perhaps, indeed, "the party and the government, recognizing the insidious plans of the Nazi aggressors, at the beginning of June 1941 began to implement measures aimed at increasing the defense capability of our country"? No, he can not. The strategic deployment started at the end

of May could in no way be a defensive deployment. Such a categorical conclusion follows directly from an assessment of the obvious and indisputable geographical and climatic conditions of the theater of alleged military operations.

Eloquent chronology

The logic and chronology here is extremely simple. The troops, which began strategic deployment at the end of May, will not complete the concentration and formation of defensive groupings until the first of July.

decades For the purposes of a strategic ~~DEFENSIVE~~ operation, this will be hopelessly late (which was confirmed with merciless clarity on the battlefields of the summer of 1941). It would be naive to expect that Hitler - if he

decides to attack the USSR - will delay the beginning of the invasion until mid-summer. It was the Red Army in "close Europe" that could solve the strategic problem with a throw of 300 kilometers. The Soviet Union had a completely different geography, and the Wehrmacht had to advance to a depth of a thousand or more kilometers. As is now known, according to the original plan of the

German command, the invasion was to begin on May 15, after the dirt roads of the European part of the USSR were completely dry after the spring thaw. But in order to prepare to repel the enemy offensive on May 15, the strategic deployment of the Red Army should have begun at least in early April. On May 24, it would be too late to complete the deployment - not

to say nothing of just starting to prepare for it.

The Balkan campaign "mixed the cards" of Hitler and led to a delay in the attack on the USSR for as much as five weeks (which, according to many military experts - and not only from among the "beaten Hitler's generals", had a fatal effect on the results of the struggle on the Eastern Front). To start an offensive in the second half of July would be complete madness for the Germans: even in the absence of any resistance from the Red Army, the German infantry (and this is four-fifths of the invasion army) would then have to trudge to the Arkhangelsk-Astrakhan line established in the Barbarossa plan waist-deep in snow. But maybe Comrade Stalin and his military leaders were

simply mistaken? They made a mistake in assessing the plans of the German command, they realized late that Hitler decided to attack the USSR already in 1941, but then, at the end of May, they realized and, realizing already that they were hopelessly late, tried to urgently catch up? No, this hypothesis is absolutely contrary to the facts. There

was no "emergency order". Everything was done exactly the opposite. The strategic deployment of the Red Army took place in the most extended time frame, without the announcement of open mobilization (it was announced on June 23 - a day after the actual start of hostilities - the situation is absolutely fantastic). The troops of the frontier districts advanced westward in short night marches through forests and swamps, observing the strictest camouflage measures. The armies of the second strategic echelon were transported from the depths of the country to the border of the Western Dvina and Dnieper rivers, while maintaining the peacetime mode of operation of the railways. The last circumstance deserves special

attention. For the multi-million armies of the first half of the 20th century, railways, trains and steam locomotives became the most important "arms of the army", which largely determined the outcome of the main battles of the two world wars. Thus, at the stage of the strategic deployment of the Wehrmacht according to the Barbarossa plan, the German railways switched to the schedule of maximum military transportation from May 23, 1941. The regime of military transportation in the European part of the USSR was introduced (since September 12, 1939) even at the stage of the strategic deployment of the Red Army before the war with dilapidated Poland. However, in June 1941, nothing of the kind was done!

In fact, in May-June 1941, the strategic deployment of the Red Army was not forced, but was dragged out in every possible way. This does not happen in a situation of belated and hasty preparation to repel aggression. If a person's house catches fire, then he runs to extinguish it at breakneck speed, and does not crawl to the conflagration in a plastunsky way on a dark night in a camouflage suit. At night, even in camouflage, they crawl for another purpose - when they want to set fire to a neighbor's house.

On May 5, 1941, Stalin appointed himself chairman of the Council of People's Commissars (SNK), that is, the head of the government of the USSR. It is hardly necessary to explain that even before May 5, 1941, Comrade Stalin had absolute power. The defeat of the intra-party opposition at the end of the 1920s, the restoration of serfdom in the countryside (collectivization and "dispossession"), the Great Terror of 1937-1938 - all these great shocks, which for a long time (if not forever) determined the fate of the country, Stalin led and carried out, not experiencing the need to formalize their actual status as the sole dictator. And until May 5, 1941, Comrade Molotov, being the nominal chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, coordinated any step, any decision of the government with the will of Stalin.

"Take the lead in offensive action"

What changed at the beginning of May 1941? From the point of view of the internal political situation in the USSR, nothing. Stalin's self-appointment made sense only within the framework of the hypothesis that it was then, in early May 1941, that he made the notorious "Principal Political Decision". In an era of great change, which this time was to be carried out on a European scale, Comrade Stalin wished to enter into the role of the legitimate head of government, to stand "on the same level" with the President of the United States, the Emperor of Japan, the monarch of the United Kingdom.

On May 10, 1941, the Defense Committee under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR approved the "List of issues to be considered at the meeting" (whom with whom is not indicated). Item 14 of the agenda reads as follows: "On additional cost estimates for the period of mobilization and the first month of the war." On June 4, 1941, the People's Commissar of the Navy N. G. Kuznetsov sends the Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars (that is, the Depu

Stalin) to N. A. Voznesensky, memorandum No. 1146. The security stamp of the document: "Top secret, of special importance." And this is indeed a document of particular importance for the historian - in it, next to the phrase "wartime", absolutely specific dates appear: "At the same time, I present a statement of the

needs of the People's Commissariat of the Navy for mine and torpedo weapons for wartime from 07/01/41 to 01/01/43. I ask for your instructions on increasing the allocated quantities of mine and torpedo weapons, given that the need for them in the 2nd half of 1941 is 50% of the total requirement for the period up to 1.01.43.

As you can see, the People's Commissar of the Navy plans to fight as early as next month. The operational plan for this great naval war has already been drawn up - otherwise, N. G. Kuznetsov could not predict the specific distribution of the consumption of mine and torpedo weapons for each six months.

On June 4, 1941, at a meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, it was decided "to approve the creation of one rifle division in the Red Army, staffed by personnel of Polish nationality and knowing the Polish language." Deadline - July 1, 1941. Why did

Stalin need a division that spoke Polish? Yes, and so urgently - by July 1. Is the Russian land so impoverished with heroes that Poles were urgently needed to defend the inviolable borders of the USSR? True, a similar incident already took place on November 11, 1939. Then, 20 days before the start of the Winter War with Finland, a decision was made to form the 106th Infantry Division, whose personnel were recruited exclusively from people who spoke Finnish or Karelian. On June 18, 1941, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union

Communist Party of Bolsheviks makes the following decision: "To issue to the People's Commissariat of Defense in June from the state reserves 750 thousand pieces of car tires with a return to the UGMR (Department of State Mobilization Reserves. - M.S.) in **September**. To allow the People's Commissariat for Rubber Industry to stop shipping automobile tires to all consumers from June 18, with the exception of people's commissariats and departments specified in Appendix 1, with the transfer of un

A very interesting document. On June 18, there is a clear understanding in the Politburo that in the coming days and weeks the People's Commissariat of Defense will have an emergency, "peak" need for tires. It was decided to cover this need using extraordinary measures, and the "gap" formed in the reserves and supply of civilian departments will be gradually filled later, starting from September-October. What did the Politburo expect? A rain of nails that will flood all the roads, or the planned start of open mobilization, in which about 240 thousand cars were to be transferred from the national economy to the Red Army?

On the eve of a grandiose offensive operation, even more important than replacing worn out tires, was the replacement of "outdated" ideas in the minds of millions of Red Army soldiers. Popularly favorite song with the words "We don't want another span." no longer fit. New songs were needed, with new words, new images and ideas. At the beginning of June 1941 (there is no exact date on the document), the 1st Secretary of the Moscow Committee and the Moscow City Committee, Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks A.S. Shcherbakov prepares a directive "On the state of military-political propaganda". The directive sets the task of carrying out "a radical turn in party political work on the Bolshevik education of the personnel of the Red Army and the entire Soviet people in the spirit of ardent patriotism, revolutionary determination and constant readiness to launch a crushing offensive against the enemy." An exhaustively clear explanation is given in Shcherbakov's directive in which direction it is

necessary to turn the "education of personal

composition":

"The foreign policy of the Soviet Union has nothing in common with pacifism, with the desire to achieve peace at any cost. As early as 1915, Lenin foresaw the possibility of an offensive policy after the establishment of socialism in one country. Leninism teaches that the country of socialism, taking advantage of the favorable international situation, must and will be obliged to take the initiative in offensive military operations against the capitalist encirclement in order to expand could not proceed with social actions. For the military being the USSR know this military weakness

receded into the past. Under these conditions, Lenin's slogan "Defend your land on foreign land" can at any moment turn into practical actions.

They were not escorted to the front

For all the importance of the tasks of logistical and propaganda support, the main component of preparations for war was, of course, the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces. It does not seem possible (at least within the current source base) to indicate an exact specific date for the start of deployment. A beautiful metaphor proposed by V. Suvorov ("A lion in the savanna at first creeps up to its victim for a long time and silently and only at the last moment with a deafening growl rushes at it in an open jump") describes the situation of May-June 1941 in the best possible way. The formations of the 16th Army and the 5th Mechanized Corps located in the distant Transbaikalia and Mongolia were the first to start moving. On May 22, 1941, the loading of the

first units into echelons began, which, taking into account the vast distance and the continuing schedule of the peacetime railways, were supposed to arrive in Ukraine, in the Berdichev-Shepetovka region, from June 17 to July 10. From May 13 to May 22, orders were received from the General Staff to begin advancing to the western border of two more armies of the reserve of the main command: the 22nd Army advanced to the Velikiye Luki-Vitebsk

region with a concentration deadline of July 1-3, the 21st Army concentrated in the Chernigov region - Gomel - Konotop by July 2. On May 29, a decision was made to form the 19th Army and deploy it in the Cherkasy-Bila Tserkva region by July 7. Not earlier than June 13, a decision was made to form, on the basis of formations of the Oryol and Moscow military districts, another one, the 20th army of the reserve of the Civil Code, which was to concentrate at Smolensk by 3-5

July.

The 21st Army mentioned above was deployed at the base of the troops of the Volga Military District. The district headquarters was in Kuibyshev (now Samara), and now one of the squares in my hometown is called "The Square of Heroes of the 21st Army." And since history

today's youth (as well as all other groups of the population) know poorly, it was decided to explain to the townspeople what kind of army it was and what heroic achievements marked its military

path. On April 29, 1998, the city newspaper "Volzhskaya Zarya" published an article by the head of the press center of the Pri-VO entitled "They were not escorted to the front." Simply and ingenuously, it described the process of what is called "covert mobilization" in cloth military language:

"They were not escorted to the front. Brass bands did not play on the platforms of railway stations and the aching sounds of "Farewell of the Slav" did not tear the soul. The 21st Army, formed in the Volga region, left its native garrisons and military camps secretly, at night. Hundreds of military echelons were filed to small railway stations and sidings at the Totsk training ground, in the Tatishchev camps, to other inconspicuous places of loading, where mobilized rifle divisions arrived from Kuibyshev and Saratov, Kazan and Ulyanovsk, Balashov and Penza. With assigned staff, inventories, full ammunition shells and cartridges. After June 13 (yes, the very day when TASS circulated the famous "Statement", which refuted the "provocative rumors" about the imminent war. - **M.S.**), they were loaded into freight cars and thrown under several railway routes under Gomel and Chernigov, to the Second Strategic Echelon. Staffed according to the states of wartime, with well-trained fighters and commanders of the main and attached staffs in field camps and at training grounds. In total, under the cover of "training camps", without announcing open mobilization, in May-June 1941, about 800 thousand reservists were called up, of which at least 668

thousand arrived in the troops before the start of the war (this minimum figure known to me is given in the Chief's Certificate Organizational Department of the Operational Directorate of the General Staff of the Red Army Colonel Efremov dated March 1, 1942). It would seem that with the presence of such a contingent of personnel, it would be possible to complete all the rifle divisions (and this is the main force in the defense) of the border military districts (future fronts) to the full staff strength of wartime. The arithmetic here is very simple: 103 rifle

divisions with an average staffing of about 10 thousand people, each of them requires an average

of 4.5 thousand people for full mobilization, a total of 463 thousand. Why, then, did many (most) rifle

divisions of the first echelon of the western districts meet the beginning of the war, being only 65–85% of the wartime staff? The answer is mentioned in plain text in the above story about the formation of the 21st Army: the contingent mobilized under the cover of "training camps" was primarily and mainly directed to the resupplying of formations of the second strategic

echelon.

This is very strange, simply unbelievable, given that the strategic deployment of May-June 1941 was a defensive deployment. For defense purposes, it was necessary to urgently complete the border rifle divisions, then the divisions of the second echelon of the western districts, and only after that - if God grants and there is still time - to start mobilizing the second strategic echelon.

But the Red Army deployed not for defense, but for delivering a surprise first strike, in the interests of which all measures were subordinated to the task of ensuring maximum secrecy and secrecy. That is why the most unmasking strategic intent actions - the mobilization of the first echelon of districts / fronts, their concentration and deployment on the border lines - were relegated to the very end of the process, and it began in the deepest rear, with the advancement of the armies of the reserve of the Civil Code (the second strategic echelon) to the border of the rivers Western Dvina and Dnieper. Only after hundreds of railway echelons rattled on the rails, in mid-June 1941, the troops of the second echelon of the border districts began to move. In the period from June 12 to 15, the command of the western districts received orders to advance "deep divisions" closer to

the state border. The deadline for completing the regrouping is July 1. Here is how Marshal I. Kh. Bagramyan describes these events in his memoirs (at that time - colonel, head of the operational department of the headquarters of the Kyiv OVO):

“On June 15, we received an order to start moving all five rifle corps of the second echelon to the border from June 17. Everything was already prepared for this: back in early May, by order of Moscow, we carried out significant work - we prepared directives for the corps, carried out reconnaissance of movement routes and areas of concentration. Now it only remained to give the command to the performers. The divisions took with them everything necessary for combat operations. For the purpose of secrecy, the troops were supposed to move only at night.

A directive of similar content and indicating the same date for the completion of the concentration - by July 1 - was also received by the Western OVO (Belarus). On the eve of the war, 32 divisions of the western districts secretly, by night crossings, through forests and swamps crept to the border. Colonel Novichkov, who at the beginning of the war was the chief of staff of the 62nd Infantry Division of the 5th Army of the Kiev OVO, writes in his memoirs: “Parts of the division set out from the camp in Kivertsy and, having made two night transitions, by the morning of June 19 they entered the defense zone, however, they did not occupy the defensive line, but concentrated in the forests near it.

Thundering with fire, sparkling with the brilliance of steel ...

The last doubts about the offensive direction of strategic deployment disappear as soon as we put on the geographical map the location of the main strike force of the Red Army - mechanized (that is, tank) corps.

Thanks to the prudently drawn in September 1939 “the line of delimitation of the state interests of the USSR and Germany on the territory of the former Polish state” (this was the official name for what is called the “western border” in books and textbooks), this “border” had two deep (120– 170 km) ledge, facing the "point" to the West. If the Red Army was going to stand up on the defensive, then only minimal cover forces should have been left on the "edges of the ledges", and the main defensive groupings should have been deployed at the bases of the Bialystok and Lvov ledges. Such a formation made it possible to avoid the encirclement of friendly troops on the territory of the ledges and to reduce the total length of the defense front (the length of the base of the triangle is always

shorter than the sum of the other two sides). The mechanized corps, as a tool for inflicting a crushing counterattack on the enemy who had broken through into the depths of the defense, should have been concentrated even further to the east, approximately at the level

of the "old" border of 1939. In June 1941, everything was done exactly the opposite. Almost all mechanized corps deployed west of the 1939 border. The four most powerful mechanized corps of the Red Army (6th, 4th, 8th and 15th), in terms of the number of tanks of "new types" (that is, T-34 and KV) surpassed all the others (and there were 26 "other" ones) combined, crowded on the very tips of the protrusions (in the diagram, the diameter of the badge is proportional to the number of tanks in the

mechanized corps, and the length of the arrow is proportional to the number of tanks of "new types"). Among these "four heroes" the 6th mechanized corps stood out in particular. By the beginning of hostilities, it had 1,131 tanks (more than the standard norm!), 294 tractors / tractors (an honorable "second place" among all mechanized corps of the Red Army), and in terms of the number of cars and motorcycles (4,779 and 1,042, respectively) he took the absolute first place. The best mechanized corps of the Red Army hid in the thicket of dense forests near Bialystok. You can guess how he got to Bialystok - a railway line approaches the city through centuries-old forests and bottomless swamps. The corps could leave Bialystok on its own only in one direction - along the highway to Warsaw, to which only 80 km remained from the then border line. The main road from Bialystok to the east, into the depths of Belarus, just as it did not exist then, does not exist to this day.

From June 14 to June 19, the command of the border districts was instructed to withdraw front-line departments to field command posts by June 22-23. So, in a telegram from the Chief of the General Staff dated June 19 to the commander of the Kiev OVO, it was said: "By June 22, 1941, the department will go to Ternopil, leaving the district department subordinate to you in Kiev. Keep the separation and transfer of front control in the strictest confidence. The deployment of fronts on

the basis of military districts, the creation of front directorates and their deployment to field command posts is war. In peacetime, fronts were never created as part of the Red Army (the Far Eastern Front deployed since the late 1930s can serve as just an example of an "exception,

confirming the rule": the border with Japanese-occupied China continuously flared up with either large or small armed conflicts). And on the contrary, front-line directorates were created before each new offensive (September 11, 1939 - six days before the start of the war with Poland, June 9, 1940 - nineteen days before the "campaign to force Romania" to transfer Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina). How many days remained from June 19 to the planned start of a grandiose offensive operation? We will be able to answer this question only after a radical expansion of the source base available to historians.

However, the most important thing is already known for certain today - none of the "three plans of Stalin" was ever implemented. On June 22, 1941, the troops of the Red Army that did not complete the mobilization, did not have time to build either the planned offensive or improvised defensive groups, were subjected to a crushing blow and were actually defeated in parts. And only the huge size of these "units", colossal human resources (in the second half of 1941, 11 million 790 thousand people were drafted into the Red Army), cyclopean mountains of weapons accumulated in the prewar years, powerful and geographically inaccessible to German aviation, the defense industry made it possible to avoid complete and final destruction.

W. Daines. Were not prepared for either defense or offensive

... In February 1939, A.M. Vasilevsky, while remaining head of the operational training department, was appointed concurrently acting assistant chief of the 1st department of the General Staff, who was also the head of the 6th department [1] . By order No. 0105 of the People's Commissar of Defense of July 19, the Operational Directorate of the General Staff and the operational departments of the headquarters of military districts and formations were reorganized[2] . This was due to the fact that the existing organization of the General Staff, headquarters of districts (armies), army groups and corps did not provide adequate efficiency in organizing command and control. The first (operational) departments, along with other departments, were subordinate to the deputy chiefs of staff, were "removed from the direct supervision of the chief of staff and generally did not receive proper guidance in their work." The Main Military Council, having discussed the current situation on July 5, recognized it necessary to change the existing situation and raise the importance of the operational directorates and departments of headquarters, entrusting them with full responsibility for organizing operational communications, managing the headquarters encryption service and for working out all intelligence data. In accordance with the decisions of the Main Military Council, the following structure of the General Staff was established for the reorganization (Operational, Military

Communications, Military Topographic Service), eight departments (weapons, supply planning, fortified areas, vehicles and dirt roads, program-statutory, military historical department, special assignments, general) and control group. The Chief of the Operational Directorate of the General Staff of the Red Army was at the same time the Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army. The issues of organizing the communications service, information and intelligence service and military intelligence were transferred to the jurisdiction of the Operational Directorate.

In this capacity, A.M. Vasilevsky took part in planning and providing leadership for military operations on the river. Khalkhin-Gol, during the campaign of the Red Army in Western Ukraine and Western Belarus and in the Soviet-Finnish war of 1939-40.

According to A. M. Vasilevsky, under the leadership of the Chief of the General Staff B. M. Shaposhnikov, a private "plan for repelling aggression" was developed, taking into account the possibility of a conflict between the USSR and Finland. This plan, in the development of which Alexander Mikhailovich also participated, was approved by the People's Commissar of Defense. The idea was to thoroughly prepare for the conduct of hostilities with the involvement of significant forces, which had to act as quickly as possible. But at that time Shaposhnikov's plan was not supported by Stalin, who believed that "there is no need for so many troops" to defeat Finland. The Main Military Council instructed the commander of the troops of the Leningrad Military District, commander of the 2nd rank K. A. Meretskov, to develop a new version of the plan for covering the border in the event of a conflict. On October 29, the Military Council of

the Leningrad Military District presented the People's Commissar of Defense with the "Plan of Operation to Defeat the Ground and Naval Forces of the Finnish Army." This plan was approved by the General Staff and approved by Marshal Voroshilov. In accordance with the plan, it was assumed that the Soviet troops, having received an offensive order, would simultaneously invade Finnish territory in all directions in order to separate the enemy force grouping and, in cooperation with aviation, inflict a decisive defeat on him. The main blow was envisaged from the Karelian Isthmus to defeat the main forces of the Finnish army in the area of Sortavala, Viipuri, Kyakisalmi (Kegsholm).

On November 15, Marshal Voroshilov signs an order that determined that the purpose of the Red Army offensive "is to defeat in a short time the opposing land and sea forces" of Finland. The order of the People's Commissar of Defense was supplemented by propaganda materials of the political department of the Leningrad Military District, which emphasized that "we are not going as conquerors, but as friends of the Finnish people. The Red Army supports the Finnish people, who stand for friendship with the Soviet Union. Victory over

the enemy must be achieved with little bloodshed. While the troops were preparing for hostilities, negotiations were underway between the USSR and Finland on the peaceful resolution of disputed territorial issues, but no compromise could be found.

By the end of November 1939, the grouping of Soviet troops (14th, 9th, 8th and 7th armies), intended for the offensive, numbered approximately 422.6 thousand people, about 2500 guns and mortars, up to 2000 tanks, [3] 1863 combat aircraft. The actions of the 14th Army were supported by the Northern Fleet, and the 7th Army - by the Baltic Fleet and the Ladoga military flotilla; just a little over

200 warships and vessels. The armed forces of Finland, together with the trained reserve, numbered about 600 thousand people, about 900 guns, 27 serviceable tanks and 270 aircraft[4]. These forces were clearly not enough to conduct large-scale offensive operations, but they were quite enough to firmly hold powerful defensive fortifications. During the hostilities, England, France and some other countries delivered to Finland up to 100 thousand rifles, over 6 thousand machine guns, 500 guns, 350 aircraft, 160 million cartridges and 2.5 million shells [5]. The Finnish army was well trained to conduct defensive and offensive battles in a wooded and swampy area, which had a poorly developed network of railways and highways. According to the plan of the Finnish command, it was planned to retreat with fighting to the "Mannerheim Line" and stop the Soviet troops there.

The official reason for the offensive of the troops of the Leningrad Military District was the incident that occurred on Soviet territory near the village of Mainila. On November 27, the central Soviet press noted: "According to the headquarters of the Leningrad Military District, on November 26 at 15.45, our troops, located a kilometer northwest of Mainila, were unexpectedly fired from Finnish territory with artillery fire. In total, the Finns fired 7 cannon shots: three Red Army soldiers and one junior commander were killed, 7 Red Army soldiers, one junior commander and one junior lieutenant were wounded. In a note from the government of the USSR dated November 26,

transmitted to the government of Finland, "the concentration of a large number of regular Finnish troops near the very border near Leningrad" in connection with the fact of "shelling" was considered as a "hostile act

against the USSR. The Finnish government was asked to immediately withdraw its troops from the border on the Karelian Isthmus by 20-25 km in order to prevent "the possibility of repeated provocations." However, on November 27, the Finnish government stated that "in connection with the alleged violation of the border", it urgently carried out an investigation and found that the shots had not been fired from Finnish territory. "It seems possible," the reply note emphasized, "that the case is about an accident that occurred during training exercises that took place on the Soviet side," and therefore "the hostile act against the USSR, which you are talking about, was not committed from the Finnish side." . At the same time, readiness to start negotiations on a mutual withdrawal of troops and an investigation into this incident was confirmed. All these proposals were called mocking by the government of the USSR in a note of November 28, and the concentration of Finnish troops near Leningrad was still regarded as a hostile act. In this regard, it was stated that the Soviet government "from this date considers itself free from the obligations assumed by virtue of the Non-Aggression Pact concluded between the USSR and Finland." The next day, in another note, it was noted that the Finnish units continued to attack Soviet troops. Therefore, the Soviet government declared that it could no longer tolerate this and "maintain normal relations with Finland." On the same day, the Finnish government, seeking to avoid war, announced its consent to the withdrawal of troops, but it was too late. On November 29, Marshal Voroshilov ordered the commander of the troops of the Leningrad Military District to launch an offensive on November 30 at 8:30. To manage "all operations and all organizational and creative work related to the front", the Headquarters of the Main Military Council of the Red Army was created, consisting of I. V. Stalin, People's Commissar of Defense K. E. Voroshilov, Chief of the General Staff B. M. Shaposhnikov and People's Commissar of the Navy N. G. Kuznetsova. According to Voroshilov, it was assumed that "the war with the Finns would be fleeting and, in any case, would not present great difficulties for our army."

On the night of November 30, Commander-in-Chief 2nd Rank Meretskov ordered the troops "to cross the border, defeat the Finnish troops and secure the northwestern borders for all time, as well as the city of Lenin, the cradle of the proletarian revolution." At 08:30, after artillery preparation, the Soviet troops went on the offensive. With the outbreak of hostilities, I.V. Smorodinov, First Deputy Chief of the General Staff, by order of the People's Commissar of Defense, was sent to the headquarters of the Leningrad Military District to assist its command. Therefore, A. M. Vasilevsky, by decision of the Chief of the General Staff, was temporarily recruited to work as his deputy for operational issues. Note that the activities of Alexander Mikhailovich in this post on December 13, 1939 were awarded the Order of the Red Star.

On December 1, in the city of Terijoki, the "Democratic Republic of Finland" was proclaimed and a "government" was established, headed by one of the leaders of the Communist Party of Finland, O. V. Kuusinen. On December 2, an agreement on mutual assistance and friendship was signed between this republic and the USSR. Nobody in the world took Kuusinen's "government" seriously, which did not bother the Soviet leadership. At the request of the Government of Finland, the Council and Assembly of the League of Nations were convened in order to stop Soviet aggression. The government of the USSR, declaring that it is not at war with Finland and maintains peaceful relations with the Finnish Democratic Republic, refused to participate in the meetings of the Council and the Assembly. After the government of the USSR refused to stop hostilities, the League of Nations adopted a resolution on December 14, which, in particular, condemned the actions of the Soviet Union in relation to Finland, which thereby "placed itself outside the League of Nations", and therefore it is no longer a member League of Nations. 29 out of 52 members of the Assembly and 7 out of 15 members of the Council voted in favor of the resolution. This allowed the Soviet leadership to evaluate such a decision as "scandalous and illegal." At the same time, the "Anglo-French warmongers" and the "Mannerheim-Tanner clique[6]" were condemned in the Soviet press. In turn, a wave of condemnation of the USSR and support for Finland rose in the world.

Defeat in the international arena was accompanied by military failures. The troops of the 7th Army under the command of the commander of the 2nd rank V.F. Yakovlev, insufficiently prepared for combat operations in a wooded area with a breakthrough of a strong fortified defense, managed to reach only the main strip of the Mannerheim Line by the beginning of December. The formations of the 14th Army of Divisional Commander V. A. Frolov operated more successfully, which, with the support of naval artillery fire from the Northern Fleet, managed to capture the Rybachy and Sredny peninsulas, the city of Petsamo within 10 days. During the same time, the troops of the 9th Army of Commander M.P. Dukhanov, in off-road conditions, advanced to a depth of 30-45 km, and the 8th Army - to 75-80 km.

The failure of the 7th Army forced the Main Military Council on December 9 to liquidate the existing "actual front management", and to entrust the direct leadership of the 14th, 9th, 8th and 7th armies, as well as the Baltic and Northern Fleets, to the Headquarters of the High Command of the Red Army. Commander of the 7th Army was appointed commander of the 2nd rank K. A. Meretskov. However, this appointment did not lead to significant changes in the situation. The army troops failed to break through the main line of defense of the Mannerheim Line. Marshal Voroshilov on December 21 recognized the inability of the Red Army troops to continue the further offensive. Therefore, on December 28, the Main Military Council of the Red Army decided to suspend the offensive and prepare for a new operation to break through the Mannerheim Line.

In early January 1940, a meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks was held with the participation of the leadership of the People's Commissariat of Defense, the General Staff, and the commanders of the troops of the Leningrad, Western Special and Kyiv Special Military Districts. The preparation of the meeting was entrusted to Shaposhnikov. He also attracted Vasilevsky to this work. At the meeting, a plan was adopted to break through the "Mannerheim Line", developed earlier under the leadership of Shaposhnikov. By decision of the Main Military Council of January 7, the North-Western Front was created under the command of the commander of the 1st rank S.K. Timoshenko, to whom the Baltic Fleet was operationally subordinate. The front included the 7th Army and the 13th Army, created at the end of December, led by Army Commander 2nd Rank V. D. Grendal. The 8th army of the comm

rank G. M. Stern, the 14th army and the emerging 15th army under the command of the commander of the 2nd rank M. P. Kovalev. The reserve of the High Command included a cavalry corps, three rifle divisions and one tank brigade.

By the beginning of February 1940, a group of troops was concentrated for a new offensive, numbering almost 975.7 thousand people, 1558 tanks and 257 armored vehicles [7]. Troops at specially equipped training grounds were trained to conduct combat operations in difficult conditions of wooded and swampy terrain with a breakthrough of powerful long-term defensive structures. Since January 3, aviation has been inflicting systematic and strong bombing strikes from the air on administrative and military industrial facilities located deep in the rear, railway junctions, and ports. From January 30, artillery, and in flying weather, aviation, destroyed enemy firing points, made passages in barriers, and struck at his artillery and reserves.

On February 11, at noon, after a long artillery preparation (in the 7th Army zone - 2 hours 20 minutes, in the 13th Army - 3 hours), the troops of the North-Western Front went on the offensive. In the course of stubborn fighting, on February 14, it was possible to break through the main strip of the Mannerheim Line. The next day, the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Finland, Marshal K. G. E. Mannerheim, allowed his troops to withdraw to an intermediate line. In the course of their pursuit, formations of the 7th Army, making extensive use of mobile groups, reached the second line of defense on February 19, but could not break through it on the move. By this time, the left-flank formations of the 13th Army had approached the main defense line of the Mannerheim Line. In order to more thoroughly prepare the troops for further actions, the commander of the North-Western Front gave them rest.

On February 22, new conditions for the conclusion of a peace treaty were sent to the Finnish government. Before the start of negotiations, Finland was supposed to transfer Khanko, the Karelian Isthmus and Vyborg, the northeastern coast of Ladoga and Sortavala to the USSR, to conclude a defensive alliance. However, the Finnish government, hoping for help from the West, was in no hurry to accept

these conditions. On February 28, the troops of the North-Western Front resumed the offensive. It was carried out in extremely difficult conditions: frost

reached sometimes 40–45 degrees; snowdrifts up to two meters deep made it difficult to advance and deliver ammunition and weapons. Despite this, the troops of the 7th Army broke through the second line of defense by the end of the day and by March 1 reached the approaches to Vyborg. The troops of the 13th Army managed to break through the main line of defense only in certain areas.

The successes of the Red Army forced the government of Finland on March 8 to start peace negotiations with the government of the USSR. Vasilevsky also joined the Soviet delegation. He, under the leadership of Molotov and Shaposhnikov, had to prepare all proposals for new borders, which were submitted for discussion during the negotiations. On March 12, a peace treaty was signed between the USSR and Finland. According to the agreement, from 12 noon the next day, hostilities were stopped, the border on the Karelian Isthmus was moved back 120–130 km (beyond the Vyborg-Sortavala line). The USSR received a small territory north of Kuolajärvi, several islands in the Gulf of Finland, the Finnish part of the Sredny and Rybachy peninsulas in the Barents Sea, and the Hanko Peninsula was leased for 30 years with the right to create a naval base on it. To demarcate the new state border, a mixed commission was created, headed by Vasilevsky from the Soviet side. For two months, members of the commission carefully studied the sections of the border line, both in terms of the natural characteristics of the area, and taking into account the economic feasibility for both sides. At the same time, some issues were resolved on the spot, in the face of rather sharp disagreements. “Ultimately, the work was found to be satisfactory,” writes Alexander Mikhailovich. “Its results fully ensured the state interests of the USSR and at the same time allowed us to maintain good neighborly relations with Finland”[8] .

The war between the Soviet Union and Finland, which lasted almost three and a half months, cost both sides dearly. The losses of the Red Army amounted to: irretrievable -126,875 people, sanitary - 264,908 people[9] . According to incomplete data, 3179 tanks were lost, including 1904 in battles[10] as well as 422 combat aircraft (almost half of them crashed or crashed). The losses of Finland, according to Finnish sources, amounted to 48243

people killed and 43 thousand wounded [11]; according to other official sources - 95 thousand killed and 45 thousand wounded

[12]. Strategically, the results of the war were in favor of the Soviet Union: it was possible to improve the situation in the northwest and north, to create the prerequisites for ensuring the security of Leningrad and the Murmansk railway. However, politically, the results achieved were not in favor of the USSR: the international prestige of the country that acted as an aggressor fell sharply, relations with other countries deteriorated, primarily with England and France, the Soviet Union was expelled from the League of Nations. Militarily, the situation was no better: the course of hostilities showed the weakness of the Red Army, strengthened Hitler in his confidence in the possible defeat of the USSR in the course of a fleeting campaign in the near future. The results of the war with Finland in March 1940 were discussed at the

plenum of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks. At the same time, it was noted that the troops are being conducted in isolation from the requirements of the war, field exercises and tactical exercises are carried out in a simple environment, the troops do not have charters, instructions and instructions that reflect the experience of military operations in 1939-40. In this regard, it was necessary to resolutely restructure the system of training and indoctrination of troops, to increase their combat readiness and combat capability. The directive of the Chief of the General Staff of March 28 indicated that the experience of the war with Finland "should be studied as soon as possible and made available to the e

In accordance with the decision of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, from April 14 to 17, an expanded meeting of the Main Military Council was held with the invitation of representatives of the central apparatus of the People's Commissariat of Defense, military districts and academies, participants in the Soviet-Finnish war. The meeting discussed the issue "On the basic principles of organizing the combat training of troops and staffs." In the adopted resolution "On measures for combat training, organization and organization of the Red Army troops based on the experience of the war against Finland and the combat experience of recent years", the task was to restructure the system of training command personnel, to carry out combat training in accordance with the new requirements of combat [14]

At the same time, there were changes in the leadership of the People's Commissariat of Defense. Voroshilov was removed from the post of people's commissar, who was replaced by Timoshenko in May 1940. Vasilevsky also received a new appointment, who was awarded the military rank of division commander in April, and on May 21, at the initiative of Shaposhnikov, he was appointed deputy chief of the Operations Directorate of the General Staff. He was entrusted with the work on the operational plan for the northern, northwestern and western directions. In the southwest and the Middle East, such work was carried out by the deputy head of the Operational Directorate, Anisov.

Taking into account the experience of the war with Finland, the General Staff was reorganized. On July 26, Marshal Timoshenko signed Order No. 0037, according to which the 5th Main Directorate of the Red Army was disbanded, and its functions and the General Staff, the Directorate was transferred to the General Staff. The structure of the General Staff was finally determined by order No. 0038 of the People's Commissar of Defense. The General Staff included eight departments (operational, intelligence, organizational, mobilization, military communications, logistics and supply, staffing, military topographic) and three departments (fortified areas, military history and personnel) [15]. Thus, the solution of all issues of combat training of troops, development of the Armed Forces, mobilization and operational planning was entrusted to the General Staff. Lieutenant General I. V. Smorodinov, N. F. Vatutin (who is also the head of the Operations Directorate) and F. I. Golikov (who is also the head of the Intelligence Directorate) were appointed deputy chiefs of the General Staff.

If the General Staff was the "brain" of the army, then the Operations Directorate was the "brain" of the General Staff. A. M. Vasilevsky, being the deputy head of this department, took an active part in the development of a number of important documents concerning the leadership of the armed struggle and the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces. One of the problems that was

not solved before the attack of Nazi Germany on the Soviet Union is the problem of organizing the leadership of the armed struggle during the war. In 1978, the Military Historical Journal (No. 2) published answers

A. M. Vasilevsky on letters from readers of his book "The Work of All Life". Alexander Mikhailovich combined all the questions into four groups. One group of questions sounded like this: "For example, as an old employee of the General Staff who took a direct and direct part in the development of the operational-strategic plan for the war against fascist Germany, they ask me: did the top party, state and military leadership consider the question of whether How will the leadership of the armed struggle in a future war be carried out? Answering this question, Vasilevsky emphasized that in May 1940, at the direction of the Chief of the General Staff, a draft decision was prepared for a report to the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks on the creation of the High Command for the period of the war. "However, this project was not finally adopted by the Politburo," Alexander Mikhailovich notes, "the existing provision remained in force that in the event of a big war the Main Military Council, headed by the People's Commissar of Defense, would lead the fighting. With such a structure of strategic leadership, we met the war with Germany. True, it lasted only a few days. Already on the second day of the war, a decision is made to create a more effective supreme body for the leadership of the armed struggle, the draft of which was developed by the General Staff even before the war. At the direction of the Chief of the General Staff, A. M.

Vasilevsky participated in the finalization of the plan for the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces of the USSR. This is discussed in detail in the book of the Marshal of the Soviet Union M.V. Zakharov "The General Staff in the pre-war years", which we will use[16] .

M. V. Zakharov writes that the draft strategic deployment plan provided that an attack on the Soviet Union could be limited only to its western borders, but the possibility of a simultaneous strike from Japan in the Far East was not ruled out. Germany was considered the most likely enemy. Italy will also take part in the war, mainly in the Balkans. On the side of Germany, Finland, Romania, and possibly Hungary may be drawn into the military conflict. Iran and Afghanistan will take a position of armed neutrality. Türkiye under

pressure from the German government can openly oppose the USSR. Thus,

the Soviet Union had to be ready to fight on two fronts: in the west and in the east. It was expected that in the west and east of the Soviet Union the enemy would be able to deploy about 270 infantry divisions, 11,750 tanks, up to 16,400 aircraft and 22,000 field guns. The size of the German army, which was the leading force of the coalition of countries that could oppose the USSR, according to the calculations of the authors of the draft plan, was up to 8 million people, 240-243 divisions, 13.9 thousand aircraft, 9-10 thousand tanks, 20 thousand guns. In total, Germany, together with Finland, Romania, Hungary, could deploy 233 divisions, 10,550 tanks, 13,900 aircraft and up to 18,000 field guns against the Soviet Union[17]. Wherein — the concentration of the main forces was expected, most likely, to the north of the mouth of the river. San, having the main grouping of troops in East Prussia. They could strike the main blow in the direction of Riga, Kovno (Kaunas) and later on Dvinsk, Polotsk or Kovno, Vilna (Vilnius), Minsk. At the same time, another grouping could follow, deployed along the Lomza-Brest line in the direction of Baranovichi, as well as the landing of amphibious assault forces in the Libava (Liepaja) region and on the coast of Estonia. In the event that Finland comes out on the side of Germany, Finnish troops, supported by German divisions, can attack Leningrad from the northwest. The draft plan noted that in the south of Poland, the Wehrmacht command could launch an offensive from the front of Helm, Tomaszow, Yaroslav to Dubno and Brody with the aim of reaching the rear of the Lvov group of the Red Army and subsequently capturing Western Ukraine. At the same time, the Romanian army and German divisions were expected to go on the offensive from the regions of Northern Romania in the general direction to Zhmerinka. With the outlined

version of the enemy's actions, the deployment of the German armed forces looked as follows. north of the mouth of the river. San (at the front of Memel, Sedlec) was expected to concentrate up to 123 infantry, 10 tank divisions, most of the aviation; south of the river mouth. San - up to 50 infantry and 5 tank divisions. It was not ruled out that in order to capture the Ukraine, and later the Caucasus, Germany could concentrate its main forces south of

the mouth of the river San, in the area of Sedlec, Lublin, in order to strike at Kyiv, accompanying him with auxiliary strikes from East Prussia. It was assumed that with this option, 110–120 infantry divisions, the bulk of armored vehicles and aircraft, would be concentrated in the south, and 50–60 infantry divisions and some of the tanks and aircraft would be concentrated in the north.

The draft plan emphasized that "the main most politically advantageous for Germany, and, consequently, the most likely, is the first option for her actions - with the deployment of the main forces of the German army north of the mouth of the San River." It was believed that from the beginning of concentration to the full deployment of its forces on the western borders of the Soviet Union, Germany would need 10-15 days, and Romania (30 infantry divisions, including 18 infantry divisions in the Botosani, Suceava area) - 15-20 days. The deployment of Finnish troops was expected in five operational directions: Leningrad, Petrozavodsk, Ukhta, Kandalaksha and Murmansk. The completion of the deployment of the Finnish and German armies was allowed no earlier than on the 20-25th day.

Enemy actions in the western sea areas were expected in three areas. The German and Finnish fleets could concentrate their forces mainly in the Baltic and Barents Seas with the task of blocking Soviet naval bases in the Baltic, landing troops in the Libava region and capturing the Moonsund archipelago, making a breakthrough into the Gulf of Finland and forcing the Baltic Fleet to withdraw to the east, and also by cruising operations and actions of submarines to establish control over communications in the Barents Sea, to block the ports of Murmansk and Arkhangelsk. The Italian fleet could deploy its operations in the Black Sea.

In the Far East, Japan could put up to 39 infantry divisions, 2500 aircraft, 1200 tanks and up to 4000 guns against the USSR and the Mongolian People's Republic[18] . The bulk of its ground forces, aviation and navy were aimed against the Soviet Primorye. In the draft plan, based on the above

alignment of forces in the east and west, it was concluded that "in this period, if it is necessary to strategically deploy the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union on two fronts, it must be considered the main

Western front. This is where our main forces should be concentrated." To the east, taking into account the capabilities of the Japanese, it is necessary to advance such a number of troops that would fully guarantee a stable position there. Minimal forces were allocated to cover and protect the northern and southern coasts, the borders in Transcaucasia and Central Asia. Since the main blow of

the Wehrmacht was expected from the area north of the mouth of the river. San, then the main forces of the Red Army were proposed to be deployed north of Polesie. In the event of the outbreak of aggression in the Western theater of operations, it was planned to deploy three fronts: in the main direction - the North-Western and Western, in the south - the South-Western. For operations in the Far East, it was planned to use the grouping of troops as part of the Trans-Baikal and Far Eastern Fronts and the Pacific Fleet.

The draft strategic deployment plan was approved by Marshal Shaposhnikov. He relied on a thorough analysis of the emerging strategic situation, probable enemy groupings and his expected aggressive actions. However, it also had shortcomings: much attention was paid to the North-Western strategic direction (to the detriment of the Central one); the absence of countermeasures in the event that the enemy delivers the main blow in the Lublin-Kiev direction, etc.

On August 15, by order No. 0094 of the People's Commissar of Defense, Marshal Shaposhnikov "according to his request, due to poor health" was relieved of his post and appointed Deputy People's Commissar of Defense [19]. Army General Meretskov was appointed Chief of the General Staff. At his direction, the draft plan for the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces

The USSR was revised. Vasilevsky, who in June was awarded the military rank of major general, with his usual conscientiousness and thoroughness revised the plan, taking into account the instructions of the new chief of the General Staff. On September 18, the plan that bore
Name

"Considerations on the Fundamentals of the Strategic Deployment of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union in the West and in the East for 1940-1941", signed by People's Commissar of Defense Marshal Timoshenko and Chief of the General Staff General of the Army Meretskov, was

submitted for consideration to Stalin and Molotov [20]. It was performed in one copy personally by Vasilevsky and was stamped "Especially Important. Top secret. Only in person."

What new did Vasilevsky bring to the new project? First, it was expected that in a war on two fronts, the USSR would have to reckon with the possibility of concentrating significantly larger forces on its borders: about 280–290 divisions, 30,000 field guns of medium and heavy caliber, and 18,000 aircraft. The number of tanks was the same - 11,750. Secondly, the strength of the Wehrmacht was specified - 243 divisions (of which 8 motorized, 15-17 tank), 10 thousand tanks, from 142,000 to 15,000 aircraft. The number of field guns remained the same - 20 thousand. Thirdly, the total number of forces that Germany, together with Finland, Romania and Hungary, could deploy in the West was adjusted - 253 infantry divisions, 15,100 aircraft. The number of tanks did not change and amounted to 10,550 combat vehicles. Fourthly, the forces that Japan could concentrate against the USSR were also specified: up to 50 infantry divisions, up to 3 thousand aircraft. The number of tanks was indicated the same - 1200

units.

Fifth, the views on the solution of the fundamental issue of the country's defense in the Western theater have become completely different. The General Staff suggested deploying the main forces of the Red Army, depending on the situation, in two ways: south or north of Brest Litovsk (Brest). The final decision to deploy, according to the General Staff, depended on the political situation that would develop immediately by the start of the war. In peacetime conditions, it was considered necessary to have both options developed. At the same time, the main option was considered that provided for the deployment of the main forces of the Red Army south of Brest-Litovsk. This statement, noted Marshal Zakharov, was in clear conflict with the assessment of the alleged intentions of the enemy, given in the new plan. The basics of the deployment of the main forces of the Red Army according to the first

Vasilevsky considered the following option (south of Brest-Litovsk).

1. Active defense to firmly cover the state borders during the period of troop concentration.

2. In cooperation with the left-flank army of the Western Front, the forces of the Southwestern Front inflict a decisive defeat on the Lublin-Sandomierz enemy grouping and reach the river. Wisla. In the future, strike in the general direction on Kielce, Krakow and reach the line of the river. Pilica, upper reaches of the river. Oder.

3. During the operation, firmly cover the borders of Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia. 4. Active

actions of the North-Western and Western fronts to tie down part of the German forces north of Brest-Litovsk and in East Prussia, firmly covering the Minsk and Pskov directions.

When deploying the armed forces according to the first (basic) option, it was proposed to deploy three fronts directly in the West - the North-Western, Western and South-Western. As part of the North-Western Front (8th, 11th armies), it was planned to have 17 rifle, 4 tank, 2 motorized rifle divisions, 2 tank brigades, 20 aviation regiments. The Western Front (3rd, 10th, 13th, 4th armies) was to include 35 rifle, 3 tank, one motorized rifle and 4 cavalry divisions, 4 tank brigades, 39 aviation regiments. The most powerful was the Southwestern Front (5th, 19th, 6th, 12th, 18th, 9th armies) - 69 rifle, 3 tank, one motorized rifle, 5 cavalry divisions, 2 tank brigades. The main tasks of the North-Western Front were: 1. Defending the coast of the Baltic Sea, together with the Baltic Fleet, to prevent enemy amphibious landings.

2. Firmly cover the Minsk and Riga-Pskov directions and neither under no circumstances should the Germans invade our territory.

3. In order to reduce the front of the 11th Army and occupy it with a more favorable starting position for the offensive during the period of concentration of troops in cooperation with the 3rd Army of the Western Front, seize the area of \u200b\u200bSeina, Suwalki and reach the Shitkemen, Filipovo, Rachki

front. 4. By concentrating troops with a blow in the general direction of Insterburg, Allenstein, together with the Western Front, to pin down the German forces in East Prussia.

The main task of the Western Front is to firmly cover the Minsk direction, to concentrate troops with a simultaneous strike from

The Northwestern Front in the general direction of Allenstein to tie down the German forces concentrating in East Prussia. With the transition of the armies of the South-Western Front to the offensive, with a strike of the left-flank army in the general direction of Ivangorod, help the South-Western Front to break the Lublin grouping of the enemy and, further developing the operation on Radom, ensure the operations of the South-Western Front from the north.

The main task of the Southwestern Front is to firmly cover the borders of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, to concentrate troops in cooperation with the 4th Army of the Western Front, inflict a decisive defeat on the Lublin-Sandomierz enemy grouping and reach the river. Wisla. In the future, strike in the direction of Kielce, Petrokov and Krakow, capture the area of Kielce, Petrokov and reach the river. Pilica and the upper course of the river. Oder.

On October 5, 1940, the strategic deployment plan was reviewed by Stalin and Molotov. The plan was reported by People's Commissar of Defense Marshal Timoshenko and Chief of the General Staff General of the Army Meretskov. By this time, events had occurred that affected the content of the presented plan. The leadership of Germany, painfully perceiving the inclusion of the Baltic countries into the USSR, took retaliatory steps. On August 30, the so-called Vienna Arbitration took place with the participation of Germany and Italy. It dealt with the disputed territorial issue between Hungary and Romania. As a result, Romania lost part of its territory, but received guarantees in the new borders from Germany. As a result, the path to Romania was closed to the Soviet Union. In its note sent to the German government, the government of the Soviet Union accused Germany of violating the Non-Aggression Pact of August 23, 1939 and qualified the guarantees of the Romanian borders as "directly directed against the USSR." However, the German leadership ignored this note. In September, a German military mission was opened in Romania, which was assessed in the USSR "as the final political and economic subordination of Romania to Germany and the further penetration of Germany into the Balkans"[21]. According to the Soviet plenipotentiary in Romania, the entry of Wehrmacht troops into this country meant that "the strengthening of the Germans on the Black Sea, the construction of air bases directly

threatens the interests of the Soviet Union. September 22 German troops appeared in Finland. Soon, on September 27, the Tripartite Pact was signed in Berlin between Germany, Italy and Japan, which provided for mutual assistance to each other in the event of an attack on one of these countries by any power that is not currently participating in World War II.

In his memoirs, Vasilevsky notes that the Chief of the General Staff told the developers of the new version of the plan that when considering it, Stalin set out his point of view regarding the most likely direction of the main attack of a potential enemy. He believed that Germany, in the event of war, would try to direct its main efforts not in the center of the front that would then arise along the line of the Soviet-German border, but in the southwest, in order first of all to seize the richest industrial, raw materials and agricultural regions. "AND. V. Stalin was convinced, - writes Marshal Zhukov, - that the Nazis in the war with the Soviet Union would strive first of all to seize Ukraine, the Donetsk basin, in order to deprive our country of the most important economic regions and seize Ukrainian grain, Donetsk coal, and then Caucasian oil »[22] . Stalin was probably under the influence of Hitler's last steps. Therefore, the General Staff was instructed to revise the plan, providing for the concentration of the main

grouping of the Red Army in the South-Western direction. The second option for deploying troops, according to Marshal Zakharov, although not openly rejected, did not receive much support. The Chief of the General Staff ordered Generals G.K. Malandin, A.F. Anisov and A.M. Vasilevsky to complete the development of all relevant issues related to the People's Commissariat of Defense and the General Staff no later than December 15, taking into account the problems associated with the People's Commissariat of Communications, and also to determine tasks for the respective military districts so that from January 1, 1941 they could begin working out their plans.

On October 14, the plan for the strategic deployment of the Soviet Armed Forces, which was finalized taking into account the comments received, was approved by the government of the USSR[23] . As we shall see later, the plan misjudged Hitler's possible design. The main blow of the Wehrmacht troops was nevertheless delivered in the western direction, and the Red

the army and people of the Soviet Union had to pay too high a price for the miscalculation of the People's Commissar of Defense, the Chief of the

General Staff and Stalin. Soon after the completion of work on the strategic deployment plan, A. M. Vasilevsky was entrusted with a responsible task. He and General V. M. Zlobin, who was on especially important assignments under the People's Commissar of Defense, were included as military experts in the government delegation headed by the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars and People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs V. M. Molotov. What prompted this trip? A. M. Vasilevsky writes that Molotov informed him and General Zlobin that the negotiations in Berlin would be purely political in nature and their main goal was the desire of the USSR government to determine Hitler's further intentions and help delay German aggression as long as possible.

In fact, the trip of the Soviet delegation was due to the strengthening of Germany's positions in Romania and Finland, as well as the signing of the Tripartite Pact. On November 9, a delegation led by Molotov left for Berlin on a special train that ran out of schedule. She was accompanied by the German ambassador to the USSR, Count F. von der Schulenburg. On the morning of November 10, the train arrived in the capital of Germany. At the Anhalt railway station, the Soviet delegation was met by a group of German statesmen headed by Foreign Minister von J. Ribbentrop and Chief of Staff of the High Command of the German Armed Forces, General Field Marshal W. Keitel. After the ceremonial required in such cases, the delegation was accommodated in Bellevue Castle. A banquet in honor of the Soviet delegation was held at the Kaiserhof Hotel. The huge hall was filled with people in tailcoats, tuxedos, military uniforms with orders and medals. The host of the banquet, Minister Ribbentrop, smiled kindly to right and left. The banquet was suddenly interrupted. There was a howl of a siren, the owners were alarmed, jumped up from their seats. German officers offered their services to members of the Soviet delegation in order to take them to the bomb shelter of Bellevue Castle.

On the same day, Molotov, accompanied by the Soviet ambassador in Berlin, translators and von Ribbentrop, went to the building of the imperial chancellery to meet with Hitler. He, according to the testimony

Vasilevsky, tried to involve the Soviet delegation in a dirty game by proposing to discuss a provocative plan to "divide the world" between Germany, Italy, Japan and the USSR. Rejecting political insinuations, Molotov demanded specific answers to questions about Berlin's policy in Central and Southeastern Europe and Germany's goals in Finland and Romania. Not finding a common language, the parties parted ways. In the evening, a reception was held at the Soviet embassy on Unter den Linden, which was attended by Reich Marshal G. Goering, Hitler's deputy in charge of the Nazi Party R. Hess, Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, and others.

And here is how the well-known aircraft designer A.S. Yakovlev, who was also a member of the Soviet delegation, describes this technique. After a mutual introduction, Hitler invited the guests to a lavishly decorated table decorated with flowers. Each had a predetermined place. Hitler and his colleagues were extremely kind to the members of the Soviet delegation. The dinner was held in an atmosphere of normal diplomatic procedure, talking about the most empty and neutral things. However, the reception was interrupted by an air raid siren - British planes were approaching Berlin. While the

diplomats were negotiating, Generals Zlobin and Vasilevsky visited the Messerschmitt Aviation Concern. Me-109 fighters and Me-110 multi-purpose aircraft were examined at the Tempelhof military airfield. They were told in detail about the tactical and technical data of the aircraft, they were allowed to make notes. The next day, we got acquainted with the armored vehicles of the Wehrmacht. During her inspection, Vasilevsky met E. von Manstein, the future Field Marshal General and his opponent. The light tanks T-1 and T-2 did not make much of an impression on Zlobin and Vasilevsky. At the same time, they listened with interest to the message of the owners about the formation of shock tank groups, the prototype of tank armies, the creation of which the theoreticians of the Red Army dreamed of. Meanwhile, Molotov's negotiations with the leadership of Germany

did not lead to success. It tried to draw the Soviet delegation into the discussion of the division of the British Empire and offered the USSR to join the Tripartite Pact. The goal is to encourage

The Soviet Union would shift the center of gravity of its foreign policy from Europe to South Asia

and the Middle East, where it would clash with British interests. As a result, the strategic positions of the USSR in Europe would be weakened. The Soviet delegation, in turn, limited itself to clarifying Germany's intentions regarding European security and problems directly related to the USSR, insisting on the fulfillment by it of previously signed agreements and discussing the situation in Turkey, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Greece and Poland[24] .

On the morning of November 14, the Soviet delegation left Berlin. From pomposity and from the ostentatious friendliness of the hosts, Vasilevsky writes, there was no trace left: a cold send-off, a dry exchange of official phrases. Berlin

saw them off with cold rain. The answer to the German proposals was given on 25 November. The leadership of the USSR formally expressed its readiness to "accept the draft four-power pact on political cooperation and mutual economic assistance", but on the condition that it assist the Soviet Union in concluding a mutual assistance agreement with Bulgaria, create a favorable regime for the USSR in the Black Sea straits, for which guarantee a base in the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles under a long-term lease for a certain number of naval and ground forces of the USSR. At the same time, it was especially emphasized that "the zone south of Batumi and Baku in the general direction towards the Persian Strait is recognized as the center of the territorial aspirations of the USSR." In addition, it was required to immediately withdraw German troops from Finland, to influence Japan so that she refused concessions in Northern Sakhalin[25] . All these conditions, in essence, affected the interests of Germany, and therefore were not accepted by it. And this, in turn, ruled out the accession of the USSR to the Tripartite Pact. Hitler, having read the answer from Moscow, was forced to admit: "Stalin is an intelligent and treacherous person. He demands more and more." Convinced that the USSR did not intend to obediently follow the instructions of Berlin, and was not going to abandon its active policy in Europe, Hitler gave the order to speed up

After returning to Moscow, A.M. Vasilevsky got involved in the preparation of a meeting of the senior command staff of the Red Army, which was scheduled for the end of December 1940, as well as operational strategic military games, which were to be held in early January of the following year. Unfortunately, Alexander Mikhailovich was not destined to take part in these important events, since at the end of November he fell seriously ill. The doctors diagnosed him with lobar pneumonia.

By this time, the leadership of Nazi Germany was actively preparing for a war against the USSR. From November 29 to December 7, 1940, a war game was held at the General Staff of the Ground Forces under the leadership of the first quartermaster, Major General F. Paulus. This game tested specific developments for the plan of war with the Soviet Union. At the first stage, the invasion of the Wehrmacht troops into the border zone of the USSR was played out, and a "discussion of operational capabilities after reaching the first operational goal" was held [26]. At the second stage, the actions of the German troops were practiced during their offensive to the Minsk-Kiev line, and at the third stage, beyond this border [27]. The results of the game were discussed on December 13 with the highest command personnel and taken into account in the final version of the plan of attack on the USSR.

On December 18, Hitler signed Directive No. 21, codenamed "Barbarossa Fall"[28]. In it, the German armed forces were tasked with "defeating Soviet Russia in the course of one short-term campaign." The idea was to split the front of the main forces of the Red Army concentrated in the western part of Russia with quick and deep strikes by powerful mobile groups north and south of the Pripyat swamps, and, using this breakthrough, destroy the disunited groupings of Soviet troops west of the Western Dvina-Dnieper line, not allowing them to withdraw into the interior of the country. In the future, it was planned to seize the main strategic objects - Moscow, Leningrad, the Central Industrial Region, Donbass and go to the Arkhangelsk - Volga - Astrakhan line, and then create a "barrier against Asian Russia along the Volga - Astrakhan line."

Unfortunately, at the end of 1940 and the beginning of 1941, the General Staff of the Red Army did not have information about the plans of a potential enemy. Therefore, the basis of the tasks of the operational-strategic games, conducted under the leadership of People's Commissar of Defense Marshal Timoshenko, became outdated by that time information about the possible plans of Nazi Germany. The games brought undoubted benefits to its participants. Military historian P. N. Bobylev, who studied the course of these games in detail, noted that "the highest command staff of the Red Army received good practice in assessing the situation and making decisions in difficult conditions, in planning and logistical support for front-line and army operations, in driving large mobile formations in cooperation with aviation"[29]. However, the beginning of the Great Patriotic War showed that at the war games such a variant of military operations was worked out, which was not planned by real "Western opponents", that is, Germany. Most of the participants in the games led formations in them, regardless of what positions they actually occupied at the beginning of 1941.

The analysis of the games was carried out by Stalin, who was clearly dissatisfied with the actions of the "Eastern" under the leadership of General of the Army Pavlov, as well as the final report of the Chief of the General Staff. As a result, Meretskov was relieved of his post, and General of the Army Zhukov was appointed Chief of the General Staff. He took up his new duties

on February 1, 1941. The materials of the December meeting and military games formed the basis of Order No. 30 of the People's Commissar of Defense of January 21, 1941 on the combat training of the Red Army for the winter period of 1940/41 academic year. It noted that in all military districts, along with the restructuring of combat training that had begun, the old vicious methods of work proved to be tenacious, and the training of troops at the present time is not everywhere at the proper level. Marshal Timoshenko demanded that the troops be trained

only in what is needed in the war, and only in the way it is done in the war[30]. In early February 1941, A. M. Vasilevsky was discharged from the hospital and began to perform his duties. By this time, the he

Lieutenant N.F. Vatutin prepared an attestation for A.M. Vasilevsky for the period from 1938 to 1940. It said:

"Tov. Vasilevsky AM - commander devoted to the cause of the party of Lenin - Stalin and the socialist Motherland. Serious government tasks performed well. Comprehensively developed and well trained in operational terms, the commander, who knows the service of the General Staff. Along with this, he knows well the combat training of troops and the training of military headquarters. Has a highly developed sense of responsibility for the task assigned. Disciplined and efficient. He is attentive to his subordinates and enjoys authority among them, as an experienced, exemplary commander who helps his subordinates in their work. He is working on himself. Possessing a broad outlook, he understands well in a large-scale environment. Works thoughtfully and attentively. Can keep military secrets. Valuable worker. The state of health requires due attention to it from the sanitary service and the correct regime at work. The position is quite appropriate. He can be the chief of staff of a special district, and in wartime - the chief of staff of the front . By February 1941, the head of the mobilization department of the Organizational and Mobilization Directorate, General N. I. Chetverikov and his deputy —

brigade commander P. N. Golubev, completed work on the draft mobilization plan, which received the name MP-41. The plan on February 12 was approved by the government of the USSR. According to it, it was planned to deploy the Armed Forces of the USSR in the amount of 344 calculated divisions, of which 198 rifle, mountain rifle and motorized rifle divisions, 31 motorized, 61 tank, and 13 cavalry divisions . The implementation of the mobilization plan required to call up about 5 million people from the reserve, including up to 600 thousand commanders and 885 thousand junior commanders [33] . In addition, it was planned to transfer to the Armed Forces from the national economy 248 thousand cars, about 36 thousand tractors and 730 thousand military horses. It was planned to provide the troops with weapons and equipment at the expense of military stocks stored in the warehouses of the districts and the center, as well as at the expense of receipts from industry in 1941-1942. In the mobilization

in terms of the rise according to the "West" option, the number of western military districts was determined at 6.5 million people, with a total number of troops (without formations of civilian people's commissariats) of 7.85 million people (in reality, by the beginning of the war, the number of western districts was only 2902 thousand people) [34] .

M. V. Zakharov, evaluating the mobilization plan, noted: "The formation of new units and formations was planned to be carried out in one turn. The creation of the second and third echelons of formations this time was not envisaged. Apparently, only for the sake of form, tasks were set: for the first half of the war, to form an additional 9 artillery regiments, by the end of the year to increase the size of the army by 219 thousand people, and the hospital network - by 400 thousand beds "[35] . According to Zakharov, the country's defense industry, lacking the necessary material capabilities, could not ensure the deployment of a large number of units and formations in a short time, especially motorized and tank divisions, in a timely manner and in sufficient quantities. The troops lacked the means of refueling and transporting fuel, communications equipment, especially cable, regimental and army radio stations. At the end of February,

Marshal Timoshenko and Army General Zhukov held a meeting of the General Staff on the condition of railways, highways and dirt roads. The conclusions were basically the following: the highway network in the western regions of Belarus and Ukraine is in poor condition. Many bridges cannot support the weight of medium tanks and artillery, and country roads require major repairs. The People's Commissar of Defense noted that in 1940, on the instructions of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, the People's Commissariat of Railways

7-year plan for the technical reconstruction of western railways. However, nothing serious has been done so far, except for changing the gauge and elementary work to adapt railway structures for loading and unloading troops and weapons.

The General Staff was also concerned that airfields were being built and military depots were located in the immediate vicinity of the new border. According to A. M. Vasilevsky, the General Staff and the persons directly in charge of the supply and maintenance of the life and combat activities of the troops in the People's Commissariat of Defense considered it most expedient to have the main

reserves away from the state border, approximately on the line of the river. Volga. Against this were the deputies of the People's Commissar of Defense G. I. Kulik, L. Z. Mekhlis and E. A. Shchadenko, who believed that aggression would be quickly repelled and the war would in all cases be transferred to enemy territory. "Apparently, they were in captivity of a misconception about the course of the proposed war," Alexander Mikhailovich noted. — Such an illusion, unfortunately, took place. In the spring of 1940, at a meeting on ideological work in the Armed Forces, the Central Committee of the Party criticized the thesis of an easy victory. From this thesis, some have drawn the wrong conclusion that the actions of the Soviet troops will necessarily be from the very beginning only of an offensive and, moreover, certainly successful character, and if this is so, then the warehouses should already be moved closer to the troops in peacetime. Consequently, they should be deployed, in preparation for war, on the territories of the new border regions"[36] .

In March 1941, Army General Zhukov sent directives to the districts explaining the procedure for developing and ensuring a mobilization plan. He set the deadline for working out plans on the ground until May 1, and then postponed it to July 20. At the same time, Zhukov, together with his deputy General Sokolovsky, presented the mobplan to Marshal Voroshilov, chairman of the Defense Committee under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. Time passed, but no decisions were made, and then in April Zhukov was forced to report personally to Stalin about the absence of an industrial mobilization plan. The draft plan was instructed to consider the deputy chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR N. A. Voznesensky, a group of leaders of the people's commissariats and the State Planning Commission, but time still turned out to be lost.

On March 8, the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR adopted a resolution on conscription for large training camps of 903,806 people. At the same time, a resolution was adopted that dealt with the functions of the General Staff of the Red Army. On its basis, People's Commissar of Defense Marshal Timoshenko signed Order No. 0113 on March 15, according to which the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense, Chief of the General Staff, in addition to managing the activities of the General Staff, was entrusted with the management of fuel supply, communications, the country's air defense and the Academy of the General Staff. In his direct subordination were the General Staff of the Red Army, the Department of Fuel Supply

and communications, the Main Directorate of Air Defense of the Red Army and the Academy of the General Staff^[37]. As a result, the General Staff lost some of its functions and became on a par with other bodies of higher military command.

Underestimation of the role of the General Staff, frequent changes in its organization could not but affect the preparation of the country and its Armed Forces to repel aggression. G. K. Zhukov noted in his memoirs: "Neither my predecessors, nor I had the opportunity to fully report to I. V. Stalin on the state of the country's defense, on our military capabilities and the capabilities of our potential enemy. JV Stalin only occasionally and briefly listened to the people's commissar or the chief of the General Staff. I will not hide, it seemed to us then that in matters of war, defense, I.V. Stalin knows no less, but more than us, understands deeper and sees further. When we had to face the difficulties of the war, we realized that our opinion about the extraordinary awareness and military leadership qualities of I. V. Stalin was erroneous "[38] years, I was never informed by I. V. Stalin about the intelligence information that he received personally .

Soviet intelligence had some, but not all, information about preparations for an attack on the USSR. The enemy skillfully concealed his preparations for the operation according to the Barbarossa plan. On Hitler's orders, Field Marshal Keitel on February 15 signed a special "Directive on disinformation of the enemy." The intelligence and counterintelligence department of the General Staff of the Supreme High Command developed and carried out numerous actions to spread false rumors and information. The movement of troops to the east was presented "in the light of the greatest disinformation maneuver in history to divert attention from the latest preparations for the invasion of England." Topographical materials on England were printed in mass quantities. English translators were assigned to the troops, a "cordon" was being prepared for some areas on the coast of the English Channel, Pas de Calais and in Norway. At the same time, information about an imaginary airborne corps was spread, and false rocket batteries were installed on the coast. The troops were given information in two versions: the first - they are going

to rest before the invasion of England, the second - German formations will be passed through Soviet territory to oppose India. To reinforce the version of the landing in England, special operations were developed under the code names "Shark" and "Harpoon". Propaganda fell upon England in its entirety and ceased its usual attacks on the Soviet Union.

Despite these measures, Moscow received information indicating that Germany was preparing for a war against the USSR. In March 1941, the Soviet military attache in Belgrade reported that Germany had abandoned the attack on the British Isles and that the immediate task was "the capture of Ukraine and Baku, which should be carried out in April-May of this year"[40] .

By March 11, General Vasilevsky, on the instructions of the Chief of the General Staff, finalized the plan for the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces in the West and East [41] . What was new in it compared to the previous version? First, it was believed that Germany had significantly more divisions deployed - 260, including 20 armored and 15 motorized. Secondly, the number of forces that Germany, together with Finland, Romania and Hungary, could deploy on the western borders of the USSR was specified - 268 divisions, 20,050 guns, 10,810 tanks and 11,600 aircraft. Thirdly, the number of forces that Japan could deploy in the East along with Manchukuo was adjusted - up to 60 infantry and one cavalry divisions, 27 mixed and 6 cavalry brigades, 850 heavy guns, the number of tanks and aircraft remained the same. Fourthly, significantly more Red Army forces were envisaged in the West and the Finnish front - 171 rifle, 27 motorized rifle, 54 tank and 7 cavalry divisions, 2 separate rifle brigades, 253 aviation regiments. As for the rest, already well-established assumptions were made about the possibility of deploying the main forces of Germany in the southeast from Sedlec to Hungary in order to seize Ukraine with a blow to Berdichev, Kiev. An auxiliary strike, as before, was expected in the north from East Prussia to Dvinsk and Riga. Concentric enemy attacks from Suwalki and Brest against Volkovysk and Baranovichi were also not ruled out.

A. M. Vasilevsky, subsequently evaluating the plan for the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces of the USSR, noted that it provided for the beginning of hostilities with repelling the attacks of the attacking enemy. At the same time, major air battles will unfold, during which the enemy will pursue the goal of neutralizing Soviet airfields, weakening military, and especially tank, groupings, undermining rear military installations, causing damage to railway stations and front-line large cities. In turn, the command of the Red Army provided for the forces of all aviation to thwart the enemy's attempts to gain air supremacy and deliver decisive air strikes against him. At the same time, an attack on the borders of the USSR by ground troops with large tank groups was expected, during which the rifle troops and fortified areas of the border military districts, together with the border troops, were to hold back the first onslaught. The mechanized corps, relying on anti-tank lines, had to, with their counterattacks, together with the rifle troops, eliminate the enemy groupings that had penetrated the defense and create a favorable environment for the Red Army troops to go on a decisive offensive. By the beginning of the enemy offensive, it was planned to enter the territory of the border districts of troops supplied from the depths of the USSR. It was also assumed that the troops of the Red Army would enter the war in all cases fully prepared and in the groupings provided for by the plan, that the mobilization and concentration of troops would be carried out in advance.

On March 20, the head of the Main Intelligence Directorate, General F. I. Golikov, presented I. V. Stalin with a report that outlined options for possible directions of attacks by Wehrmacht troops during an attack on the Soviet Union. As it turned out later, they reflected the outlines of actions under the Barbarossa plan, and in one of the options, in essence, the essence of this plan was reflected. However, Golikov's conclusions essentially devalued the significance of the information given in the report and misled Stalin: "1. Based on all the above statements and possible options for action in the spring of this year, I believe that the most possible date for the start of actions against the USSR will be

appear the moment after the victory over England or after the conclusion of an honorable peace for Germany with her.

2. Rumors and documents that speak of the inevitability of a war against the USSR this spring must be regarded as disinformation coming from British and even, perhaps, German intelligence"[42] . On April 8, the General Staff sent an order to the commanders

of the troops of the Western and Kiev Special Military Districts, in which they obliged them to carry out a number of measures to create new and use old fortified areas, including the formation of personnel for the departments of fortified areas. Soon, another directive was received in the border districts, ordering "to urgently mount all weapons available in the district for fortified areas into military installations and put the latter on alert", and in the absence of special weapons "to install temporarily (with a simple seal) in embrasure openings and boxes machine guns on field benches and, where possible, guns"[43] . On April 10, intelligence data were reported to Stalin about the alleged start of military operations by Germany against the USSR at the end of June 1941. The information received through the—

channels of the People's Commissariat of State Security of the USSR indicated that "Germany's action against the Soviet Union was finally decided and will follow soon. The operational plan of the offensive provides. lightning strike on Ukraine and further advance to the east."[44] Marshal Zhukov in 1956, preparing for a speech at the Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU, noted that Stalin and the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars Molotov knew about the concentration of German troops near the Soviet borders. As an example, Georgy Konstantinovich referred to his report sent to Molotov. It cited examples of mass violations of the state border of the USSR by German aircraft during the period from April 1 to April 10, 1941. Flights were carried out to a depth of 90-200 km from the border in order to collect intelligence information and photograph the area. The Chief of the General Staff asked the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars "to report this question to Comrade. Stalin and take possible measures"[45] . At the direction of the Chief of the General Staff, on April 10, General Vasilevsky prepared a directive on the operational deployment of troops

border military districts. In particular, for the Western Special Military District it was indicated: "The main tasks are: with the transition to the offensive of the South-Western Front (South-Western Front. - **Auth.**) - a blow from the left wing of the Western Front in the general direction to Sedlec - Radom, attack from the South-Western Front, defeat the Lublin-Radom enemy grouping. The immediate task is to capture Sedlec, Lukov and capture the crossings across the river. Wisla.

Develop a plan for the first operation of the 13th and 4th armies and a plan for the defense of the 3rd and 10th armies. Thus, as before, they proceeded from the established strategic axiom: a) the main threat is in the southwestern direction; b) strike the enemy with a counter blow, immediately go over to the counteroffensive and smash the enemy groupings.

Despite intelligence data about a possible attack by the Wehrmacht on June 15, 22 or 25, Stalin believed that in a situation close to the victorious end of the war with England, Hitler would not go to a disastrous war for Germany on two fronts. And, in the meantime, in connection with Hitler's decision to expand the scale of Operation Marita (attack on Greece), changes were made to the plan for Operation Barbarossa on April 7. They provided for the postponement of its beginning to a later date and the completion of all preparatory measures. [47] Stalin, in turn, believed, by government was extremely interested about June 22, 1941, that the British in provoking a German war against the USSR. Therefore, he assessed as provocative the memorandum of the British government dated April 18 (it said that if the war dragged on, Great Britain might come to the idea of ending it on German terms) and the letter delivered to him on April 19 by W. Churchill, which contained a warning about Germany's intensive preparations for attack on the USSR.

In the second half of April, in order to strengthen the composition of the western border military districts, the formation of 10 artillery anti-tank brigades of the RGK and 4 airborne corps began. On April 26, the military councils of the Trans-Baikal and Far Eastern military districts were instructed to prepare one mechanized, two rifle corps, and two airborne divisions for dispatch to the west. Simultaneously with Directive No.

org / 3 / 522698 of the General Staff is tasked with transferring the air force rear services to a new system by July 1, 1941 and organizing new air base areas [48] . On May 5, a solemn meeting

was held in the Grand Kremlin Palace dedicated to the graduation of commanders who graduated from military academies and military faculties of civilian universities. Stalin[49] addressed its participants . Congratulating the graduates on their graduation, he noted that over the past three or four years a new army has been created, armed with modern military equipment. At a banquet arranged after the reception of graduates, Stalin, in response to the toast of one of those present for the peaceful Stalinist foreign policy, made an amendment: - Peace policy ensured peace in our country. Peace politics is a good thing. For the time

being, we carried out a line on the defensive - until we rearmed our army, did not supply the army with modern means of struggle. And now that we have reconstructed our army, saturated it with equipment for modern combat, when we have become strong, now we must move from defense to offensive. In defending our country, we must act offensively. From defense to move on to a military policy of offensive operations. We need to reorganize our education, our propaganda, agitation, our press in an offensive spirit. The Red Army is a modern army, and a modern army is an offensive army.

But what kind of offensive could we talk about, even if they didn't really have time to prepare for the defense? On the

day when Stalin spoke at a reception in honor of graduates of military academies, General Golikov signed a new intelligence report. It made the following conclusions: 1. In two months, the number of

German divisions in the border zone against the USSR increased by 37 divisions (from 70 to 107). Of these, the number of tank divisions increased from 6 to 12 divisions. With the Romanian and Hungarian armies, this will amount to about 130 divisions.

2. It is necessary to reckon with the further strengthening of the German concentration against the USSR at the expense of the liberated troops in Yugoslavia with their grouping in the area of the Protectorate and on the territory of Romania.

3. A further strengthening of German troops on the territory of Norway is likely, the North Norwegian grouping of which in the future can be used against the USSR through Finland and by sea.

4. The available forces of German troops for operations in the Middle East at this time are expressed in 40 divisions, of which 25 are in Greece and 15 in Bulgaria. For the same purposes, up to two parachute divisions are concentrated with their probable use in Iraq"[50] .

On May 6, People's Commissar of the Navy Admiral Kuznetsov reported to Stalin that the naval attache in Berlin, Captain 1st Rank Vorontsov conveys:

"The Soviet citizen Bozer (a Jew, a former Lithuanian citizen) informed our assistant morattashe that, according to one German officer from Hitler's headquarters, the Germans were preparing an invasion of the USSR through Finland, the Baltic states and Romania by May 14. At the same time, powerful air raids on Moscow and Leningrad and parachute landings in frontier centers are planned. An attempt to find out the original source of information and expand this information has not yet yielded results, since Bozer evaded this. Work with him and verification of information continues. I believe that

the information is false and is specially directed along this channel so that it reaches our Government and checks how the USSR will react to it" [51]

On May 8, TASS denied rumors about the concentration of Soviet troops on the western borders. The next day, the USSR severed diplomatic relations with the emigrant governments of Belgium, Norway and Yugoslavia, and on May 12 recognized the pro-German regime in Iraq. On May 13, the General Staff sent a directive to the districts on the beginning of the advance of troops to the west from the internal districts. From the Urals, the 22nd Army went to the Velikiye Luki region; from the Volga Military District to the Gomel region - the 21st Army; from the North Caucasian Military District to the area of Belaya Tserkov - the 19th Army; from the Kharkov Military District to the line of the Western Dvina - the 25th Rifle Corps; from Transbaikalia to Ukraine to the Shepetovka region - the 16th Army. In total, in May, 28 rifle divisions and four army departments were transferred from the internal military districts closer to the western borders. However, the divisions consisted of 8-9 thousand people each and did not have the military equipment fully provided for by the state.

On May 14, directives were sent to the commanders of the troops of the border military districts, which required "to cover the mobilization, concentration and deployment of troops" to develop detailed plans for the defense of the state border, anti-amphibious and air defense [52]. The Western Special Military District was to develop these plans by May 20, the Leningrad and Kiev Special by May 25, and the Baltic Special by May 30. The troops received only defensive tasks: to prevent the invasion of the ground and air enemy, the landing of his air and sea assault forces; to cover the mobilization, concentration and deployment of their troops. The directives contained instructions for the evacuation, mining and undermining of some important objects. At the same time, the People's Commissar of Defense ordered the early graduation of cadets from military schools and immediately send them to the troops.

Army General Zhukov, considering it necessary to have a plan that provided for a preemptive strike against a possible enemy, instructed General Vasilevsky to finalize the draft "Considerations on the plan for the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union in case of war with Germany and its allies." Such a document was prepared by [May-45\[53\]](#). It was handwritten by Vasilevsky, addressed to the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and was not signed by either the people's commissar of defense or the chief of the General Staff. What was it connected with? The answer is given by Vasilevsky in his unpublished interview dated 1965: "All the strategic decisions of the high military command, on which the operational plan was built (for 1940-1941. - *Auth.*), As the workers of the operational department believed, were approved by the Soviet government. Personally, I came to such an idea because, together with another deputy chief of the operational department (General Staff. - *Auth.*), comrade. Anisov in 1940 twice accompanied, having with him the operational plan of the Armed Forces, the Deputy Chief of the General Staff Comrade. Vatutin to the Kremlin, where this plan was to be reported to Stalin. As a result of its consideration, we did not receive any notes in the plan or instructions in the future on any amendments to it. There

rejected, although continued work on it indicated that, apparently, he received approval. Based on the strategic decisions made by the government and the high military command, the plan for a major war in the West was worked out by the General Staff together with the relevant units of the People's Commissariat of Defense and the command of the western border districts. It was also linked to the mobilization plan of the Armed Forces. A few weeks before the attack on us by fascist Germany, all the documentation on the district operational plans was handed over to the command and headquarters of the respective districts. A. M. Vasilevsky, a man with

the gift of strategic foresight, was able to correctly determine the intention of the enemy. The "Considerations on the plan for the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union in the event of a war with Germany and its allies" noted: "Given that Germany currently keeps its army mobilized, with deployed rears, it has the opportunity to warn us in deployment and deliver a surprise strike. In order to prevent this, I consider it necessary in no case to give the German command the initiative to act, to preempt the enemy in deployment and attack the German army at a time when it will be in the deployment stage and will not have time to organize the front and the interaction of the military branches. In contrast to the previous strategic deployment plan, more active missions were assigned to the troops. The first strategic goal of the actions of the Red Army

should be the defeat of the main forces of the Wehrmacht deployed south of the Brest-Demblin line, and the exit by the 30th day of the operation north of the line of Ostrolenka, the river. Narew, Lovich, Lodz, Kreutzburg, Opeln, Olomouc. As a subsequent strategic goal, it was planned to go on the offensive from the Katowice region in a northern or northwestern direction, defeat large enemy forces in the center and on the northern wing of the German front, and seize the territory of former Poland and East Prussia.

Based on this, the immediate task was determined - the defeat of the German army east of the river. Vistula and exit in the direction of Krakow to the border of the rivers Narew, Vistula and mastery of the Katowice region. To solve this problem, it was planned to apply:

the main blow by the forces of the Southwestern Front in the direction of Krakow, Katowice and cut off Germany from her southern allies; an auxiliary strike by the left wing of the Western Front in the direction of Warsaw, Deblin with the aim of encircling the Warsaw grouping and capturing Warsaw, as well as assisting the Southwestern Front in defeating the Lublin grouping. In addition, it was planned to conduct an active defense against Finland, East Prussia, Hungary, Romania and be ready to strike against Romania if the situation was favorable. The transition to the offensive from the Chishev-Lyudovleno line was planned to be carried out with the forces of 152 divisions against 100 German ones. In other sections of the state border, it was planned to conduct active defense. The document developed by

General Vasilevsky outlined the following tasks for the fronts. The Northern Front (Leningrad Military

District) was to defend Leningrad, the port of Murmansk, the Kirov railway, and, together with the Baltic Fleet, ensure complete dominance in the waters of the Gulf of Finland. The task for the North-Western Front was defined on a scheme that we do not have. The Western Front was supposed to defend itself, and with the transition of the Southwestern Front to the offensive, strike with the left wing in the direction of Warsaw and Sedlec, Radom, defeat the Warsaw grouping and capture Warsaw in cooperation with the Southwestern Front. In addition, the Western Front was supposed to defeat the enemy's Lublin-Radom grouping, reach the river. Vistula and moving parts to capture Radom. Responsible tasks were assigned to the Southwestern Front. Firstly, with a concentric strike by

the armies of the right wing, encircle and destroy the main enemy grouping east of the river. Vistula near Lublin. Secondly, simultaneously with a strike from the Senova, Przemysl, Lyubavnech line, defeat the enemy in the Krakow and Sandomierz-Kielce direction, seize the area of Krakow, Katowice, Kielce, meaning in the future to advance from this area in a northern or northwestern direction to defeat large forces of the northern wing of the enemy front and the capture of the territory of former Poland and East Prussia. Thirdly, to firmly defend the state border with Hungary and Romania and

be ready to deliver powerful blows against Romania from the Chernivtsi and Chisinau region with the immediate goal of defeating the northern wing of the Romanian army and reaching the line of the river. Moldova, Iasi.

Some researchers tend to evaluate the draft "Considerations on the Plan for the Strategic Deployment of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union" as "aggressive". What kind of aggression could there be? After all, the Soviet Union did not have a common border with Germany, whose troops were located both on the territory occupied by them as a result of the defeat of Poland, and on the territory of Germany's allies. The Chief of the General Staff in this case proceeded from the provisions of the charters, which required attacking the enemy, wherever he was. was.

Stalin not only rejected the proposal for a preemptive strike, but also responded with a categorical refusal to the requests of Timoshenko and Zhukov to be allowed to put the troops of the border districts on alert, accusing them of trying to provoke Germany to attack, to give Hitler a pretext for aggression. On May 16, Stalin ordered his secretary Poskrebyshev to summon Zhukov. "Stalin was very angry with my report and instructed me to convey," recalled Georgy Konstantinovich, "that I would no longer write such notes "for the prosecutor": that the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars was more aware of the prospects for our relations with Germany than the chief of the General Staff, that the Soviet Union still has enough time to prepare for the decisive battle with fascism. And the implementation of my proposals would only play into the hands of the enemies

of Soviet power . Stalin, worried about the state of the country's defense, at the end of May convened an extended meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, at which the chief of the General Staff, General of the Army Zhukov, made a report on the state of the country's defense preparations[56] . He stressed the need for a general mobilization in the country, since not all divisions in the border military districts were staffed to full strength, and in the internal districts, most of the formations were kept on reduced staffing. Of particular concern to the Chief of the General Staff was the state of equipping the troops with new military equipment, including KV, T-34 tanks, BM-13 (Katyusha) combat

the emerging 20 mechanized corps, artillery, communications equipment. The construction of fortified lines along the state border was not completed. Stalin, summing up the meeting, practically supported all the principal conclusions of the chief

General Staff[57]. He instructed the development of priority specific proposals to eliminate shortcomings in the preparation of the country for defense, which should have been submitted to the government for a decision. After the

meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, further steps were taken to prepare to repel possible aggression. At the end of May, the General Staff instructed the commanders of the military districts to urgently begin preparing command posts. In late May - early June, in accordance with the MP-41 plan, 793,500 conscripts were called up to equip 21 divisions of border districts, artillery, air defense units and fortified areas[58]. On June 4, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks decided to increase the strength of the Red Army in peacetime by 120,695 people and in wartime by 239,566 people.

These were all timid steps, caused by the fear of "provoking" Hitler, who had long been ready to attack the Soviet Union. Stalin still resolutely suppressed all local initiatives. So, in early June, the military council of the Kiev Special Military District, at the suggestion of Colonel General M.P. Kirponos, made the right decision to withdraw part of the forces of the permanent garrisons of fortified areas to the foreground in order to put the wood-and-earth firing points built there on alert. The head of the border troops of the NKVD of Ukraine, T. A. Strokach, informed the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs L. P. Beria about this order, who immediately passed the information received to I. V. Stalin. As a result, Zhukov and Timoshenko were inflicted with a real dressing down and it was forbidden to make any advances of troops to the front lines without Stalin's personal instructions. The Chief of the General Staff was forced to telegraph Kirponos: "Report to the People's Commissar of Defense for a report on the basis on which parts of the fortified areas of the KOVO were ordered to occupy the foreground. Such actions can immediately provoke the Germans into an armed clash and

fraught with all sorts of consequences. Cancel such an order immediately and inform who specifically gave such an unauthorized order. The next day, Zhukov ordered all the commanders of the western border military districts "not to occupy the forefield without a special order from the field and UR units, but to organize the protection of the foreground structures by sentries and patrols"[59]. The commanders of the troops of the border military districts, at the direction of Stalin, were summoned to Moscow, where they received the strictest instructions from the People's Commissar of Defense and the Chief of the General Staff to be vigilant and prevent the Wehrmacht from provoking an armed clash with Soviet troops.

Stalin, as we have already seen, did not always trust intelligence reports. But in some cases he treated them more attentively. Thus, the information received from Berlin on June 12 alarmed him so much that the Chief of the General Staff was able to send a directive on the same day to the commanders of the troops of the border military districts with instructions to withdraw divisions located in depth, closer to the state border, from June 12 to 15. The commander of the Kyiv Special Military District ordered the rifle divisions located in the depths to begin advancing at 20:00 on June 18 in full force, but without mobilization reserves. In the Western Special Military District, the commanders of rifle corps and divisions received verbal orders to advance from the depths closer to the border.

On June 13, Zhukov and Timoshenko asked Stalin for permission to bring the troops of the border military districts to full combat readiness and deploy the first echelons according to the cover plan. The implementation of this decision made it possible, to a certain extent, to give the troops a chance to meet the enemy, as they say, fully armed. But Stalin promised to think. Why did

Stalin not believe in the possibility of a German attack? First, foreign and military intelligence, judging from the published information, reported several different dates for the attack, which (except for June 22) did not come true. Secondly, the disinformation campaign of the Soviet leadership played its role. Rumors were circulating in Germany: Stalin would come to Berlin, they were already sewing red flags for the meeting, an imminent invasion of

England. On June 13, the Völkischer Beobachter newspaper published an article by the Imperial Propaganda Minister J. Goebbels entitled "Crete as an example", which was supposed to give the impression that the landing of German paratroopers on Crete was a rehearsal for an attack on Great Britain. The newspaper was immediately confiscated. Goebbels noted in his diary on June 14: "English radio has already stated that our actions against Russia are an empty bluff, behind which lies our preparation for an invasion (of the British Isles. - Auth.). That was the main goal. The world news is in complete disarray . "[60]

On the day when Goebbels rejoiced that the disinformation of the Soviet leadership played a role, a TASS report was published in Pravda. It declared that all rumors about Germany's intention to break the non-aggression pact and attack the Soviet Union were groundless. Unfortunately, it only disorientated the commanders of the Red Army and dulled their vigilance. All these miscalculations in assessing the international situation and flirting with Nazi Germany turned fatally against the Soviet Union. Assessing this document, A. M. Vasilevsky wrote: "The TASS report of June 14, 1941 is, on the one hand, a military-political sounding, which clearly showed that Germany was heading for a war against the USSR and the threat of war was approaching. This followed from the deathly silence of the fascist leaders in response to the request addressed to them by the Soviet government. On the other hand, this statement showed the desire of our government to use every opportunity to delay the outbreak of war, to gain time to prepare our Armed Forces to repel aggression. Thus, I believe it is correct to consider that the TASS report of June 14, 1941 is evidence of the concern of the party and government for the security of our country and for its vital interests. The fact that this message is a foreign policy action is evidenced by the continued implementation of organizational mobilization measures, the transfer of military formations to the west, the transfer of a number of enterprises to fulfill military orders, etc. We, the employees of the General Staff, as, of course, other Soviet people, the TASS message initially caused

some surprise. But since it was not followed by any fundamentally new directives, it became clear that it does not apply either to the Armed Forces or to the country as a whole. ^[61].

However, there was no time to prepare to repel possible aggression. The subsequent steps taken by the top military leadership of the Red Army could not prevent the catastrophe looming over the border military districts. So, from mid-June, ammunition was issued in some formations, vacations for personnel were canceled, and the construction of command posts began. The troops were working out the "Plan-instruction for raising troops on combat alert." At the urgent request of the military council of the Odessa Military District, by a personal order of the Chief of the General Staff dated June 14, the district, according to the mobplan, was allowed to "allocate an army command and withdraw it to Tiraspol on June 21, 1941," that is, transfer the command of the 9th Army to a field command post. At the same time, it was ordered to leave the district administration, headed by the deputy commander of the district, General N. E. Chibisov, in Odessa to lead the troops stationed in the Crimea. On the same day, the commander of the Kiev Special Military District received a similar instruction: he was ordered to withdraw the headquarters of the Southwestern Front to Vinnitsa by June 25^[62].

On June 15, the commander of the Baltic Special Military District demanded to maximize the combat readiness of the units and disperse the aircraft. According to this order, the commanders of the rifle divisions were to develop plans for the defense of their zone, and the preparation of anti-tank mines and wire obstacles in front of the front line was to be carried out in such a way that a minefield, by special order, if necessary, could be established within 3 hours. At the same time, it was necessary to carefully work out an air defense plan, to disguise aircraft, tanks and artillery. All these activities were to be completed by June 25.

On June 17, People's Commissar for State Security of the USSR V.N. Merkulov sent a message to the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. In it, citing a source working at the headquarters of the German aviation, it was noted that "all German military measures to prepare an armed uprising against the USSR have been completely completed, and

strike can be expected at any time. Hungary can take an active part in hostilities on the side of Germany. On the accompanying note to the message, Stalin made a resolution: "T-shchu Merkulov. You can send your "source" from the headquarters of Germ. aviation to e ... mother. This is not a "source", but a disinformant. I. St." [63]. On June 18, the —

commander of the Baltic Special Military District ordered that the theater of operations, air defense, communications equipment be put on alert, and points for organizing field depots, anti-tank mines, explosives and anti-personnel barriers be identified in the sector of each army. The order ordered to prepare improvised materials for the construction of crossings over the rivers Viliya, Nevyazha, Dubyssa, prepare pontoon shelves for building bridges across the Neman, and also conduct reconnaissance of the most important bridges with a view to their subsequent. At the same time, the military councils of the armies mechanized [64] and the commanders of the destruction of the corps were ordered to begin moving troops into the lanes and areas designated for them according to the cover plan, taking with them "only what is necessary for life and combat." On June 19,

the Soviet resident in Rome, G. I. Rogatnev, received a message from a most valuable agent: "Germany will attack the USSR between June 20 and 25." At the same time, the Breitenbach agent at an extraordinary meeting with an employee of the Berlin residency B. N. Zhuravlev said: "Germany will attack the USSR on June 22 after 3 o'clock in the —

morning " On the same day, June 19, General of the Army Zhukov sent telegrams to the commanders of the troops of the border military districts, instructing the people's commissar of defense to withdraw the front and army departments to field posts. By June 22, the commander of the Kiev Special Military District was ordered to withdraw the headquarters of the front (South-Western. - Auth .)

Ternopil with the strictest secrecy. The Front Directorate of the North-Western Front, headed by the commander of the Baltic Special Military District, was supposed to arrive in Panevezys on June 22-23, and the Western Front in Obuz-Lesna. At the same time, the chief of the General Staff set the task of working out the issues of interaction with the fleet within two weeks in accordance with the cover plan. People's Commissar of Defense in order to mask airfields

demanding by July 1 "to sow all airfields with grasses in the color of the surrounding area, paint the runways and imitate the entire airfield situation in accordance with the surrounding background." The linear, crowded arrangement of aircraft was strictly forbidden, it was required to mask warehouses, workshops and parks by July 1, to organize by July 5 in each aviation base area 8-10 false airfields with mock-ups of aircraft. By July 15, it was ordered to complete all work on the camouflage of artillery and mechanized units[66] . The fleets and flotillas received an order to switch to operational readiness No. 2.

The deadlines set by the People's Commissar of Defense show that he did not have information from the Soviet residency about a possible attack on the Soviet Union in the period from June 20 to 25. Otherwise, it would be unreasonable to set such terms. Who will sow airfields with grass and paint runways when the enemy has already gone over to

the offensive? After Stalin found out about the events in the Baltic Special Military District, he again gave Timoshenko and Zhukov another scolding. As a result, on June 20, the chief of the General Staff sent a telegram to the commander of the district forces demanding that the order to put the air defense system on alert be canceled, since it causes various rumors and unnerves the public. On the same day, the administration of the 9th Army of the Odessa Military District was alerted and, under the guise of command and staff exercises, by the end of the day deployed a command post in an area pre-equipped in case of war, establishing contact with the formations —

included in the army[67] . The faster the time set by Hitler for the start of Operation Barbarossa approached, the more alarming became the reports that came to the General Staff from the border military districts. At 10 p.m. on June 21, the chief of staff of the Baltic Special Military District, General P. S. Klenov, reported to the General Staff that the Germans had completed the construction of bridges across the Neman, and the civilian population was ordered to evacuate at least 20 km from the border, "there is talk that the

for the offensive" [68]. troops received order to take the starting position Chief of

district, General V. E. Klimovskikh reported that the wire fences of the Germans, which still stood along the border during the day, were removed by evening, and in the forest, located not far from the border, the noise of motors was heard. The chief of staff of the Kyiv Special Military District, General M. A. Purkaev, reported a defector who said that the German "troops were leaving for the starting areas for an offensive that would begin on the morning of June 22."

On the evening of the same day, June 21, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks decided to create the Southern Front as part of the 9th and 18th armies. The management of the latter was allocated from the Kharkov military district. The formation of the field administration of the Southern Front was assigned not to the Odessa District, but to the headquarters of the Moscow Military District. Such a decision did not correspond to the situation and was clearly unsuccessful. The personnel of the district headquarters did not know this theater of operations and its features, the state of the troops, their capabilities and tasks. There was no time to study all this. By the same decision, Army General Zhukov was entrusted with the leadership of the Southern and Southwestern Fronts, and Army General Meretskov with the Northwestern Front.

In connection with alarming reports, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, Molotov invited the German ambassador Schulenburg and told him that Germany, without any reason, was deteriorating relations with the USSR every day. Despite repeated protests from the Soviet side, German planes continue to intrude into its airspace. There are persistent rumors about the upcoming war between the Soviet Union and Germany. The Soviet government has every reason to believe this, because the German leadership did not react in any way to the TASS report of June 14. Schulenburg promised to immediately report the complaints he had heard to his government. However, this was just a simple diplomatic excuse on his part, because the German ambassador was well aware that the Wehrmacht troops were on full alert and were just waiting for a signal to move east. While Molotov was making claims to Schulenburg, Army General Zhukov, having received reports from the chiefs of staff of the border military districts, immediately reported this to Marshal

Timoshenko and Stalin, who summoned both to him. They arrived in the Kremlin with a draft directive on bringing

troops on full alert. On Stalin's instructions, it was immediately finalized and signed by Timoshenko, Zhukov and G. M. Malenkov, a member of the Main Military Council. The directive addressed to the military councils of the Leningrad, Baltic Special, Western Special, Kiev Special, Odessa Military Districts and in a copy to the People's Commissar of the Navy stated:

"1. During 22-23.6.41, a surprise attack by the Germans is possible on the fronts of the LVO, PribOVO, ZapOVO, KOVO, OdVO.

The attack may start with provocative actions. 2. The task of our troops is not to succumb to any provocative actions that can cause major complications.

At the same time, the troops of the Leningrad, Baltic, Western, Kyiv and Odessa military districts should be in full combat readiness, to meet a possible surprise attack by the Germans or their allies.

3. I order: a)

during the night of June 22, 1941, covertly occupy the firing points of fortified areas on the state border; b) before dawn on June 22,

1941, disperse all aviation, including military aviation, over field airfields, carefully disguise it;

c) put all units on combat readiness. Troops to keep dispersed and disguised;

d) put the air defense on alert without additional lifting of the assigned staff. Prepare all measures to darken cities and objects; e) no other activities without special orders

conduct" The ^[69].

transfer of the instruction in encrypted form from the General Staff to the districts ended only at 00:30 on June 22. It took some time to decipher it. And, after all, it was possible to transmit to the districts the previously established signal: "Proceed with the implementation of the 1941 cover plan," which would have taken only a few minutes.

The directive arrived at the headquarters of the Western Special Military District at 00:45 on June 22. After 15 minutes, the commander of the district, General of the Army D. G. Pavlov, reported to the People's Commissar of Defense that over the past day and a half, the Suwalki ledge had been continuously

German motorized columns are coming. Marshal Timoshenko advised the district commander not to panic, to gather headquarters in the morning just in case, and if there were separate provocations, to call. Immediately after the conversation with the People's Commissar, General of the Army Pavlov ordered the commanders and chiefs of staff of the armies to bring the troops into combat condition and occupy all military-type structures and even unfinished reinforced concrete fortifications. The commanders of the 3rd, 10th, and 4th Armies and the District Air Force reported to Pavlov that the troops and aviation were ready for battle. At 2:25 and 2:35 the directive received from Moscow was sent to the army headquarters. At the signal of "Thunderstorm", the "Red Package" was put into action, in which there was a plan to cover the state border. The headquarters of the Kyiv Special Military District received the directive at 01:45, and the army headquarters received it at 2:35 on June 22. However, orders and instructions to put the troops on combat readiness in most cases were received too late - a little more than half an hour remained before the start of the artillery preparation of the enemy.

Things were more prosperous in the fleet, since Marshal Timoshenko directly warned the people's commissar of the Navy, Admiral Kuznetsov, about the need to bring the fleet to combat readiness No. 1. He immediately quickly gave the appropriate orders with the set password. As a result, the fleet was put on alert 3-4 hours before the start of the war.

A. M. Vasilevsky in his memoirs tried to answer the question: why did Stalin, knowing about the clear signs of Germany's readiness for war with the Soviet Union, still not give his consent to the timely bringing the troops of the border military districts to combat readiness? "In itself, bringing the troops of the border zone to combat readiness is an extraordinary event, and it cannot be regarded as something ordinary in the life of the country and in its international position," writes Alexander Mikhailovich. - Some readers, without taking this into account, believe that the sooner the Armed Forces were brought to combat readiness, the better for us, and give sharp assessments to Stalin for his unwillingness to take such a step even at the first sign of Germany's aggressive aspirations. They also reproached me for the fact that, as they believe, I omitted criticism of him. I will not detail

stop at the extremes. Let me just say that premature combat readiness of the Armed Forces can do no less harm than being late with it. From the hostile policy of a neighboring state to war, there is often a huge distance. I will dwell only on the case when Stalin obviously hesitated to make a decision to transfer the army and the country to a full wartime regime. So, I think that although we were not quite ready for war yet, as I already wrote about, but if the time had really come to meet it, we had to boldly step over the threshold. JV Stalin did not dare to do this, proceeding, of course, from the best of intentions. But as a result of untimely bringing to combat readiness, the Armed Forces of the USSR entered into a battle with the aggressor in much less favorable conditions and were forced to retreat into the depths of the country with battles. It would not be wrong to say that if, in addition to the enormous efforts of the Party and the people aimed at strengthening the military potential of the country in every possible way, we add the timely mobilization and deployment of the Armed Forces, transferring them completely to a combat position in the border districts, military [70] actions **would** unfold in many respects differently." What forces and means of the enemy were concentrated near the — .

western borders of the Soviet Union? By the end of the day on June 21, 1941, the German army

groups North, Center, South, the separate German army Norway, the Finnish and two Romanian armies, and the Hungarian corps group were completing their deployment. In total, in the first strategic echelon of the enemy there were 153 divisions and 19 brigades (of which German - 125 divisions and 2 brigades), over 4 thousand tanks and assault guns, about 4.4 thousand combat aircraft, almost 39 thousand guns and mortars; the total number of this grouping, together with the German Air Force and Navy (192 ships of the main classes), amounted to almost 4.4 million people. The strategic reserve of the High Command of the Ground Forces (OKH - German Oberkommando des Heeres) of Germany had 28 divisions and brigades, about 500 thousand people, 8 thousand guns and mortars, 350 tanks[71] .

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The grouping of the Red Army troops looked as follows. In total, the western border military districts consisted of 170 divisions, 2 separate rifle and 12 airborne divisions.

brigades. These forces were relatively evenly distributed along the entire border and dispersed to a great depth. In addition, 7 divisions, 2 brigades, 11 operational regiments of internal troops and 49 border detachments were stationed here. At a distance of 10-50 km from the border in the first echelon of the covering armies there were 53 rifle and 3 cavalry divisions, 2 separate rifle brigades. The second echelon, located 50-100 km or more from the border, consisted of 13 rifle, 3 cavalry, 24 tank and 12 motorized divisions. 100-400 km from the border there were 62 divisions of the reserve of military districts, at the turn of the Western Dvina and Dnieper rivers - 13 divisions intended for the South-Western Front and the reserve armies of the High Command (RGK). 10 divisions of internal military districts were on the move. Most of the mechanized corps were attached

to the combined arms armies, which were entrusted with covering the state border. The main forces were located on a broad front, 30-40 km from the state border, and the divisions in the corps were located at a distance of 50-100 km or more from one another. Such a dispersal of formations with the outbreak of hostilities required significant regroupings and did not allow in a short time to assemble the main forces of the mechanized corps for delivering concentrated strikes. Most motorized rifle regiments did not have enough vehicles.

In total, the grouping of Red Army troops in the Western theater, taking into account 16 divisions of the RGK, totaled 3 million people, about 39.4 thousand guns and mortars, 11 thousand tanks and more than 9.1 thousand combat aircraft[72]. Thus, the enemy had a superiority of 1.3 times in manpower, an equal ratio in guns and mortars, but was inferior to the Soviet troops in 2.1 times in combat aircraft and 2.7 times in tanks. However, in terms of the quality of military equipment, the advantage was on the side of Germany. Its troops were fully equipped and deployed, equipped with transport and were in a state of full combat readiness. The troops of the Red Army advanced to the western border, according to the majority of researchers, were not prepared either for defense or, even more so, for an

offensive. ***From the book: Daines V. O. Vasilevsky. Moscow: Veche, 2012.***

Part II. Preemptive strike or treacherous attack?

M. Solonin. With little blood, on foreign territory ...

Since the publication of V. Suvorov's book "Icebreaker", the issues of military planning in the USSR in 1939-1941 have become (and still remain) one of the most acute topics of public discussion. The adamant and irreconcilable "Suvorovites" and "anti-Rezunists" seem to have clashed at least a thousand times in a heated argument about the fenders of the BT tank and the production indices of the Kharkov Tank Plant.

Meanwhile, the process of declassifying and introducing more and more new documents into scientific circulation is going on - slowly, unevenly, but going on. The basis for a serious substantive discussion is being formed. We will try to consider some of these new documents in this article. But before turning to the analysis of the content of specific strategic planning documents, we will have to spend a few words discussing seemingly obvious and indisputable truths.

Plan by plans

The army lives by order. The General Staffs do develop "all sorts of different plans for all occasions," but not a single plan is developed without a direct and precise directive from the military-political leadership of the country. It is sad that such ordinary things have to be proved, but to this day there are (and in abundance!) "Professors" who stubbornly continue to name a huge set of documents developed at the turn of the 30-40s in the NGOs and the General Staff of the Red Army, "Zhukov's note", which "note" is a document obviously not serious, composed on the basis of personal initiative, in his free time from an easy service. "Soviet military planning for the period from September 39th to July 40th is still covered with a veil of state secrets and

represents the least studied piece of pre-war history." We have to remind you that

not only the general political situation in the Stalinist USSR, but also the very specific directives of the country's top leadership ruled out the possibility of any "initiative" in the development of strategic plans for the use of the Armed Forces. So, in September (there is no exact date on the document) 1938, by the decision of the Defense Committee under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, "the procedure for developing top secret, special importance issues at the General Staff of the Red Army" and a list of basic documents were approved: "The operational plan consists of the

following documents: a) Government directive on the basics of the strategic deployment of the Red Army b) A note approved by the People's

Commissar of Defense of the Chief of the General Staff on the general strategic deployment of the Red Army and the tasks of the fronts, fleets and aviation, with maps and a summary table of the distribution of military formations by fronts and armies ... "

The decision of the CO emphasized that "only the people's commissar of defense, his first deputy, the chief of the General Staff, the first deputy of the NGSh and the head of the first department (later this structure became known as the operational management. - **M.** S.) of the General Staff can know the operational plan of the Red Army as a whole." This is an important clarification, especially for those who continue to ask in bewilderment: "If there was a plan for the invasion of Europe, then why didn't the captured commanders of the Red Army tell the Germans about it?" What could the commanders of regiments and divisions who were taken prisoner (and in some cases willingly collaborated with the enemy) tell if the operational plan was not known in its entirety even by the deputies of the people's commissar in the rank of marshal and the commanders of the districts in the ranks of colonel general

or army general? On October 4, 1940, the head of the Operational Directorate of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Vatutin, drew up the next "Plan for the Development of Operational Plans for 1940-41". The name is not quite literary, but the content was extremely clear. Everything is scheduled by the day: by November 20 to develop general directives, on November 23 to call to the General Staff and familiarize the chiefs with the plan "as far as

headquarters of the military districts, by December 3 to approve in the People's Commissariat of Defense the decisions of the commanders of the troops of the districts, by February 15 to develop an operational plan "for the main course of action" and a plan for covering mobilization and deployment. The document ends with an interesting phrase: "Introduction of the

operational plan into force from 1.5.41." The harshness of Russian laws is mitigated by non-enforcement, and the rigid demands of Stalin-era Soviet planning were mitigated by the continuous adjustment of those plans themselves. So Comrade Vatutin on February 1, 1941 draws up a new (and even more detailed) "Plan for the Development of Operational Plans", in which all dates are shifted by 3-4 months, in particular, decisions of the district commanders are planned to be approved by March 25, 1941. Point 18 is the requirement "to provide the troops with topographic maps according to the "southern version" - by 1.5.41, according to the "northern version" - by 1.7.41." The specific content of the terms "southern version", "northern version" will be discussed later. Now let's turn to the earliest (of the

discovered by me) documents. "In order to ensure the surprise of the invasion..." On December 1, 1936, Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army Marshal Egorov signed (and People's Commissar of Defense Marshal Voroshilov approved on December 16 with his signature) a document entitled "Initial Provisions of the Operational Part of the War Plan in the West for 1937-1938".

The drafters of the document call Germany the main enemy of the USSR: "Without the participation of Germany and without its direct support, it is unlikely that other states bordering on us will act against us. We include Germany, Poland, Hungary and Finland in the aggressive anti-Soviet bloc. The position of Estonia, Latvia, Romania and Bulgaria "may be determined by the outcome of our first battles with the armies of the bloc." E

Yes, taking into account our today's post-knowledge, such a conclusion seems self-evident, the only possible one. But in December 1936 there might have been other opinions. Suffice it to recall that on December 15, 1936, Comrade Surits, the ambassador (plenipotentiary) of the USSR in Germany, met with Hermann Goering;

March 1937 Kandelaki was invited to Herbert Goering (cousin of Hermann Goering and the closest collaborator of Mine). During these secret meetings, the possibility (actually realized much later, in August 1939) of a "sharp turn" in the relationship between the Nazi and Bolshevik regimes was discussed. All the more remarkable in this context is the completely unambiguous anti-German orientation of the "Initial Provisions" of December 1936.

However, the practical part of the plan concerned combat operations not so much against the German army (at that time the Soviet Union did not have a common border with Germany at any point), but against Poland. It was supposed to act very decisively:

"To defeat the states that opposed the USSR by conducting a swift offensive operation with the aim of defeating their armed forces in parts, for which: a) direct the main efforts

against the German-Polish armed forces with the aim of decisively defeating them, meaning inflicting a devastating defeat on the Poles in the first border battle until they are supported by the Germans, in order to then fall upon the latter with all their might.

The immediate task of the Red Army is to capture the Vilna corridor (a strip of the territory of modern Lithuania and Belarus with the cities of Grodno, Lida, Vilnius, Molodechno, Postavy. - **M.S.**) from the city of Vilna, and to the south to go out with the main forces of the fronts: Western - to the Bialystok region, Brest, Pruzhany, Volkovysk; South-West -

in the area of Rava-Russkaya, Lviv, Stryi. b) destroy the Finnish forces deployed in the Karelian sector of the North-Western Front, and their fleet in the Gulf of Finland, with the immediate task of capturing Kexholm

(now Priozersk. - **M.S.**) and Vyborg. c) against Estonia, Latvia (at that time the USSR did not have a common border with Lithuania. - **M.S.**)

and Romania to ensure a strong defense. d) with the outbreak of war, immediately open independent operations by all aviation forces with the task of destroying enemy aircraft at operational concentration airfields, disrupting the railway concentration of ground forces, and paralyzing

management in the capital centers and the work of the main industrial enterprises of defense importance, to prevent the landing of German troops in the ports of the Baltic states and the appearance of their fleet in the Finnish bay.

e) Simultaneously with the opening of hostilities of the air forces, begin an invasion operation in the main directions: Postavy - Vilna, Molodechno - Lida, Baranovichi - Slonim (for the Western Front), Rivne - Lutsk, Tarnopol - Krasne (for the Southwestern Front) with the task of destroying parts of the cover and disrupt the mobilization in the border zone, disrupt the concentration of the main forces of the enemy (emphasized by me. - **M.S.**) on the cover positions prepared in advance, capture and secure inter-lake defiles and river lines in order to ensure the starting position for the offensive of their main

forces.

To ensure the surprise of the invasion, prepare a covert mobilization (BUS) of units and formations intended for these operations. A careful reading of this document removes the

slightest doubt about the real content of the phrase "to defeat the states that opposed the USSR." This "fig leaf" of ostentatious peacefulness appears in the text only as a result of self-censorship, a long-term habit of hypocritical "newspeak" that has entered the bloodstream. The authors of the document (and their main Master) are not at all going to wait for the "performance" of the enemy army. Nothing but a sudden first strike can fulfill the firmly and repeatedly set task of "disrupting the mobilization and concentration of enemy troops on cover positions." Here (and always henceforth) the term "acting against the USSR" was understood to mean the very fact of the unpunished existence of "that part of the international bourgeoisie which, not recognizing the equality of the communist system that is replacing the capitalist system, strives to overthrow it" (Lenin's famous formulation of Article 58 Criminal Code of the RSFSR).

On a solid foundation

The "starting positions" of December 1936 actually contain all the main features of the subsequent versions of the "plan for war in the West." Yes, in the future, the toponymy of the theater of alleged military operations, the composition of the forces of the parties, the depth of the offensive, the ratio of the number of "invasion units" and "main forces" will change many times, but the main content of the operational plan of the Red Army was already formed:

- the defeat of the armed forces of the enemy during the "rapid offensive operation" as the basis of a strategic plan;
- a sudden preemptive strike by aviation and part of the ground forces ("invasion forces") with the task of disrupting the mobilization and concentration of enemy troops;
- the final defeat of the enemy after the main forces of the Red Army reached the front lines captured by the "invasion forces"; - carried out in

peacetime covert mobilization (in the form and under the pretext of holding "Large training camps") of units and formations intended for delivering a preemptive strike.

The material basis for such decisive plans was quite weighty, rough, visible. Already in December 1936, 116 rifle divisions, 23 cavalry divisions and 26 tank brigades were supposed to be deployed for the war in the West. From the air, this armada was supposed to be supported by 5368 combat aircraft as part of the air forces of the fronts and another 2309 aircraft of the RGK aviation. Do I need to remind you that at that time such a number of tank and aviation units was several times greater than the capabilities of the armed forces of all the likely opponents of the USSR

combined? And in only one respect, the plan of December 1936 was very, very restrained: neither Warsaw, nor Berlin, nor Helsinki, nor Bucharest, never appear in the text of the document. One gets the impression that at that time the visible power of the Red Army exceeded the political stability of the regime and Stalin did not yet have a clear intention to increase the number of "fraternal Soviet republics" without irrevocably consolidating his power in the territory already "conquered by the Bolsheviks" (Lenin's term).

Cautious optimism

Following 1936, the 37th year, memorable for the country and the people, came. For Marshal Yegorov, this year was fatal - in May he was removed from the post of head of the General Staff of the Red Army (arrest and execution would be much later) with the wording "he ruined the work of the General Staff, entrusting it to seasoned spies of the Polish, German and Italian intelligence services." The new chief of the General Staff was another former colonel of the old Russian army, commander of the 1st rank Shaposhnikov. It was his hand in black ink that the multi-page report "On the Strategic Deployment of the Armed Forces of the USSR in the West and East" was written. The document is addressed to People's Commissar of

Defense Voroshilov, signed by the executor on March 24, 1938. "The emerging political situation in Europe and the Far East, as the most likely opponents of the USSR, puts forward the fascist bloc of Germany and Italy, supported by Japan and Poland. These states set themselves the goal of bringing political relations with the USSR to the point of an armed clash. The highly vacillating policy of Britain and France allows the fascist bloc in Europe to find an agreement, in the event of a war with the Soviet Union, in order to direct the bulk of its forces against the USSR. The same policy of England and France determines the policy and nature of the martial law in Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Romania, as well as in Turkey and

Bulgaria. So, in the strategic planning document, there was a mention of the two largest European powers: France and Great Britain. As yet they are not regarded as enemies, but only as "strongly hesitant" opponents of our enemy. As potential, but extremely unreliable allies (the bastards will agree with the Germans at a decisive moment and allow them to concentrate most of their forces on the Eastern Front). The foreign policy orientation of Finland, Romania and Turkey is much more realistically defined in the document.

As for the practical part of the strategic deployment plan, it is still focused on the task of defeating the combined Polish-German forces. It is noteworthy that any possibility of military cooperation between the USSR and Poland, its separation from the virtual union with Germany is not considered at all; Poland is an enemy and ally of the main enemy, other options (in

in particular, the one that actually materialized) are not even discussed. The composition of

the forces of potential opponents is outrageously overstated: in the newborn Wehrmacht, 96 infantry, 5 motorized and 5 cavalry divisions were found, as well as some mysterious "tank battalions" in the amount of 30 units, 190 tanks each! 35 millionth Poland on the pages of Shaposhnikov's report deploys 65 infantry and 16 cavalry divisions, lifts 1650 combat aircraft into the air and drives 1450 tanks over bumps and

tankettes.

Having overestimated the strength of the armed forces of Germany and Poland by two to three times, and even summing up the figures obtained, Shaposhnikov received a united coalition of enemy troops, surpassing the Red Army forces in the number of formations (in the Western theater it was supposed to deploy 124 rifle and 16 cavalry divisions, 26 tank brigades) . In only one aspect, the Red Army was supposed to be stronger than the enemy: "Given the superiority of our tank weapons against enemy tanks and tankettes, we will have unconditional superiority in this weapon." Lacking (in the virtual, and by no means in the real world) numerical superiority

over the enemy, Shaposhnikov nevertheless proposes a plan of attack - however, the most cautious and restrained of all currently known: "The most advantageous direction of the main attack will be to conduct it along both banks R. Neman with the task of defeating the

German-Polish forces concentrating here with the release of our main forces in the area of Vilna, Grodno, Volkovysk, Novogrudok, Molodechno. Breaking through the enemy front will allow us either to develop the operation by striking at the main [grouping] of the enemy on the territory of Lithuania, or to strike at the Baranovichi grouping. The stated 1st option in terms of concentration allows us to catch up in the collection of the bulk of the troops with our probable opponents, and the battles will begin at the very border. As a "2nd option", a situation was considered in which the enemy would concentrate his main forces south of the swamps of Polesie (that is, on the territory of the Volyn and Tarnopol provinces of Poland). In this case, it was assumed that

for a complete

it will take the enemy up to 28-30 days to concentrate, and the command of the Red Army will be able to establish this fact ("our reconnaissance of enemy concentration movements will allow us to determine where their main forces will be deployed, and therefore, starting from the 10th day of mobilization, we can also change the option of our deployment. "). After that, it was planned to rapidly transfer troops from Belarus to Ukraine and launch an offensive there: "The main task for the 2nd option will be to inflict a decisive defeat on the German-Polish forces. Therefore,

our main forces should be deployed on the Novograd Volynsky, Proskurov front to strike at the Lutsk, Lvov front, meaning with the main forces to go to the Kovel, Lvov, Brody, Dubno region with a further attack on Lublin ... "

New Horizons

Plans for the defeat of the "combined Polish-German troops" remained on paper. In real history, everything turned out incomparably better for Stalin. Without a single shot (or with a minimum number of shots and losses), all these Kovel, Lvov, Brody, Dubno, as well as Grodno, Lida, Volkovysk, Baranovichi, found themselves in the tenacious embrace of the "homeland of the working people of the whole world." August 1939 is, without a doubt, the high point of Stalin's political biography. Practically for nothing, just in exchange for a promise not to interfere ("non-aggression pact"), Hitler was forced to give Stalin a fair chunk of Eastern Europe, from the Baltic to the Danube. Then, in exchange for crude oil, unenriched ore, and flax tows, hand over to the Kremlin extortionist the latest models of weapons, military equipment, unique industrial equipment, instruments and

technologies.

In the reality that prevailed in the autumn of 1939, when the threat from the "German-Polish bloc" was removed or at least radically reduced, new horizons opened up before Stalin. In every sense of the word. Soviet military planning for the period from September 39th

to July 40th is still covered with a veil of state secrets and

represents the least studied fragment of pre-war history. Yes, the general political attitude is well known. First, it was voiced (on October 31, 1939 from the rostrum of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR) by Comrade Molotov: "Over the past few months, such concepts as "aggression", "aggressor" have received a new concrete content, acquired a new meaning. Germany is in the position of a state striving for a speedy end to the war and for peace, while England and France stand for the continuation of the war and against the conclusion of peace. Then

(November 30, 1939) the Boss himself, in his usual short and harsh manner, rapped out: "It was not Germany that attacked France and England, but France and England attacked Germany, taking responsibility for the present war. the ruling circles of Britain and France rudely rejected both the peace proposals of Germany and the attempts of the Soviet Union to achieve a speedy end to the war. These are the facts." And what, in

the face of such facts, was the mighty, but invariably peace-loving Soviet Union to do? Is it possible to silently accept the fact that the predatory sharks of Anglo-French imperialism rudely reject its peace proposals? Has not the time come to call them to account, to force them into peace? According to sound logic,

documents reflecting the process of preparing the Soviet Union for war against future allies in the anti-Hitler coalition should have been destroyed. Until the last leaf. Immediately after June 22, 1941, the concepts of "aggressor" and "aggression" once again received a new content. In a situation where the great Stalin had to ask Churchill to send 25-30 British divisions to the Soviet-German front, such documents turned into the most dangerous "material evidence". And yet, something remained. And not in the singular!

In July 2010, directives on operational issues of the Transcaucasian Military District of 1940 were declassified (TsAMO, f. 16, op. 2951, file 223). Among other documents, a memorandum addressed to the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army Shaposhnikov, signed on January 13, 1940 by the commander of the ZakVO troops, army commander 2nd rank Tyulenev and a member of the military council of the district, divisional commissar Doronin, was discovered.

The army commander and the commissar report the following: "Based on the intelligence of the 5th Directorate of the Red Army and the international situation, it is clear that the British and French are preparing a war in the Middle East against the USSR. According to the same data, Turkey and Iran are mobilizing, forming new units, concentrating and regrouping troops to our borders. On the basis of all intelligence data, it can be assumed that Turkey and Iran, provoked (as in the text. - **M.S.**) by the British and French, are preparing to start a war in the spring of 1940.

"Provocative War"

Less than a month later, on February 7, 1940, Tyulenev sent to Moscow (in duplicate, addressed to Stalin and People's Commissar of Defense Voroshilov) a report "On the situation in the Middle East and the combat readiness of the troops of the Transcaucasian Military District." Judging by the report, the situation is bad: "Today, the Anglo-French bloc has managed to achieve great efforts in mobilizing forces in the Middle East for another armed provocation against the USSR. Another provocative war being prepared by the Anglo-French bloc against the USSR can be expected from the Middle East in the spring of 1940. Today the situation is drawn as follows

form."

"All documents are a description of the plan for the preparation and conduct of a large-scale offensive operation outside the state borders of the USSR." Further, the situation is drawn with such broad strokes that 44

(forty-four!) Turkish, Iranian and "Anglo-Indian" divisions, "as well as 1500-2000 aircraft" appear in the haze of mirages.

It is worth noting here that the joint command of the allies (England and France), which really considered plans for a bomb attack on the oil fields of Baku in the winter-spring of 1940, expected to involve 6-8 squadrons in this operation, that is, no more than a hundred aircraft. However, in another case of shamelessly overestimating the enemy's forces (Comrade Tyulenev, already in the position of commander of the Southern Front, will become famous for this again in the summer of 1941), there is nothing particularly remarkable. Something else is much more interesting:

twice repeated phrase about some kind of "provocative war". And - "another" (that is, at least one "provocative war" has already taken place). There are no such words

in modern Russian, but in January 1940, in a special, "internal language" in which Stalin's comrades-in-arms communicated with each other, the meaning of the expression "a provocative war unleashed by the Anglo-French bloc" was beyond doubt. This is a Finnish war. Yes, the one that began under the thunder of orchestras, under the roar of the newspaper crowd and the public tantrums of the court "poets". The one in which the valiant Red Army was supposed to help the "people's government of democratic Finland" (headed by Comrade Kuusinen, a member of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, living in Moscow) with a triumphal march to enter Helsinki. Login failed. And when the number of killed, wounded and frostbite "liberators" went up to tens, and then hundreds of thousands, other songs were sung in a low voice. It

turns out that all this is one big provocation. "The barbaric plutocratic gang of Mannerheim, Ryti, Tanner, bribed by foreign imperialists, criminally provoked the war" (quote from the address of the head of the "people's government", Comrade Kuusinen, dated February 23, 1940). And now, after Finland cunningly refused to accept the conditions of the Soviet dictatorship, the invariably peace-loving comrade Stalin was simply forced to "succumb to provocation."

Judging by the documents that have become available, in the Middle East it was supposed to "yield to temptation" and "succumb to provocations." Moreover, on a much larger scale than in the snowy north of Europe:

"In order to master the Middle East theater of operations, immediately begin to study the geographical, climatic and meteorological conditions of the theater. Pay special attention to the study of the following objects:

- a) the ports of Istanbul, Izmir (Smyrna), Sinop, Samsun, Trebizond, Gallipoli; b)
- the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles;
- c) the cities of Ankara and Kirikale (35 km east of Ankara).

Work with the pilots and navigators on the possible route options indicated in the appendix. Prepare charts and have ready navigation and operational calculations with various bomb load options. Ensure the strictest preservation of military secrecy on this issue. Head of the Red Army Air Force, commander of the 2nd rank Smushkevich.

On May 11, 1940, Divisional Commissar Shabalin submitted a memorandum to the head of the Main Political Directorate of the Red Army, Mekhlis, in which he reminded with great concern of "the need to carefully review the organization of units and formations of the Red Army from the point of view of their readiness to wage war in the Middle East theater." Not only army commanders, but

also Soviet naval commanders were preparing for the war against England and its allies. So, in the "Note of the Air Force Commander of the Black Sea Fleet on the plan of operations of the Air Force of the Black Sea Fleet" (the document was drawn up no earlier than March 27, 1940), we read: "Probable enemy: England, France, Romania, Turkey. The tasks of the Air Force are: to strike at ships in the waters of the Sea of Marmara, the Bosphorus, laying minefields in the Bosphorus. The

report of the commander of the Black Sea Fleet Air Force to the Main Naval Staff on the plan for the development of aviation of the Black Sea Fleet for 1940–1941 suggested the following development of events:

"The tasks of aviation in theaters of military operations: 1. The Black Sea. Delivering powerful bombing strikes on bases: Constanta, Izmail, Varna. 2. Aegean Sea: Thessaloniki, Smyrna. 3. Mediterranean Sea: Alexandria, Haifa, Suez Canal, about. Malta, Brindisi. By systematic strikes on the Suez Canal, deprive England and the Mediterranean states of the possibility of normal operation of this communication.

In the same months of the spring of 1940, the Main Directorate of the Air Force of the Red Army prepared a document on 19 pages entitled "Description of routes in India No. 1 (Barochil, Chitral passes) and No. 4 (Killio, Gilchit, Srinagor passes)". On 34 pages, the Air Force Main Directorate compiled a "List of military-industrial facilities" of Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and India.

Almost all of these countries are colonies or semi-colonies of Great Britain and France.

"In a bloc with Germany, Japan and Italy"

The war against the "warmongers, the imperialists of England and France" seemed to be so decided that they already began to talk about it out loud without any hesitation: Army report on

the international situation. Kalinin made a statement about the inevitability of a big war in the spring of 1940, in which on the one hand the USSR would stand in a bloc with Germany, Japan and Italy against the Anglo-French bloc. Romania will be the instigator of this big war, but at the very beginning of the conflict, Romania will receive a blow from three directions, that is, from the USSR, Germany and

Bulgaria, after which Turkey, Iran, England, France and, possibly, the USA will enter the war. The war with Romania will end very quickly, but hostilities with England, France and their allies will be protracted."

On March 5, 1940, Deputy Head of the Special Department of the Main Directorate of State Security of the NKVD of the USSR, Major of State Security Osetrov, reported about such an interesting report to the People's Commissar of Defense Voroshilov. Whether Commander Kalinin himself thought of all this, or whether he simply retold to his subordinates some other report he heard in a more serious place than the lecture hall of the district house of the Red Army, science does not yet know this. It is only known for certain that after the report of the main "special officer" nothing bad happened to Comrade Kalinin. On June 4, 1940, he received the rank of lieutenant general and continued to safely command his district. It remains to be assumed that in March 1940, public statements about "the inevitability of the war of the USSR against the Anglo-French bloc", and even in alliance with Nazi Germany, were not at all assessed as a vicious slander on the invariably peaceful policy of the party and government.

Here it is appropriate to recall the grandiose program for the construction of the Navy, the implementation of which began in the USSR in the late 1930s. In 1938, it was decided to build 15 (!!!) battleships, 35 heavy and 20 light cruisers, 145 leaders and destroyers within ten years. Later, this program was somewhat reduced - in seven years it was necessary to build "only" 6 battleships. History, as Soviet propagandists wrote, "let us have little time." So few that even simple rifles were not enough for all the soldiers, and bottles had to be used to fight tanks. Time, however, was enough to start building three battleships of the Soviet Union series (Project 23).

The estimated cost of one such monster was set at 1 billion 180 million rubles. With all the reservations that the price in the conditions of the Soviet anti-market economy was a rather conditional category, we note that the stunning figure corresponds to the cost of 3,000 of the latest T-34 tanks or 80,000 anti-tank 45-mm guns (this is the question of the ill-fated bottles). So for what, for the war with whom, where and against whom were

such resources spent? Were the battleships going to stop the advance of German tanks in the steppes of Ukraine? Why did a huge continental power (the Soviet Union) need 267 submarines? And this despite the fact that by the beginning of World War II, the naval empire of Great Britain had 58 submarines, Germany - 57, Italy - 68, Japan - 63. Which country's naval blockade was supposed to be carried out by the giant Soviet submarine fleet?

Manuscripts did not burn

There are many questions. No one has yet found unequivocal documentary answers (that is, directives for the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces of the USSR in the period 1939 - the first half of 1940). And this is a very strange, thought-provoking fact. But we will leave these reflections to the share of the readers and return to the consideration of real events.

At the moment, at least 13 main documents are available, drawn up between the summer of 1940 and May 1941 and directly reflecting the process of developing the operational plan of the Red Army. These are: - a memorandum from the People's Commissar of Defense

of the USSR and the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army to the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks to I.V. Stalin and V.M. later 15 August 1940

of the year;

- a document with the same name, but with a number (No. 103202) and the exact date of signing (September 18, 1940);

- memorandum of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR and the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army in the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks to I. V. Stalin and V. M. Molotov No. 103313 dated October 1940 (this document is usually referred to as the "refined October strategic deployment plan"); -

Directive of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR to the commander of the troops of the Leningrad Military District for the development of an operational deployment plan, w / n, dated

November 25, 1940; - instructions of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR on the development of a plan for the operational deployment of the armies of the Kyiv OVO,

w / n, dated November 28, 1940; - memorandum of the chief of staff of the Kyiv OVO by decision of the military council of the South-Western Front according to the operational deployment plan, w / n, no later than December 1940;

- Directive of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR to develop a plan for the operational deployment of the armies of the Baltic OVO, w / n, no later than January 1941;

- a note on the action plan of the Western Front, b / n, no later than February 1941; - Directive of the

People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR on the development of a plan for the operational deployment of the armies of the Baltic OVO, w / n, dated March 3, 1941;

- memorandum of

the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR and the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army in the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks to I. V. Stalin and V. M. Molotov "An updated plan for strategic deployment

Armed Forces of the USSR in the West and in the East", w/n, March 11, 1940;
- Directive

of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR to develop a plan for the operational deployment of the troops of the Western OVO, w / n, April 1941 of

the year; - Directive of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR on the development of a plan for the operational deployment of troops of the Leningrad

Military District, w / n, dated April 11, 1941; - considerations on the plan for the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union in the event of a war with Germany and its allies,

w / n, dated May 15, 1941. Thus, we have at our disposal five variants of the general operational plan of the Red Army and two documents for each of the four fronts deployed in the west. And that's not all. Several dozen work maps have been declassified (TsAMO, f. 16, op. 2951, dd 240 and 245), which graphically reflect the plans and directives mentioned above.

Dozens of documents are available on plans to cover the mobilization and deployment of all border districts. The materials of two strategic games held with the highest command staff of the Red Army in January 1941, and documents of front-line games held in the Baltic and Leningrad districts have been declassified. Finally, several textual documents and maps have been unearthed relating to a previously unknown strategy game played in May 1941.

Taking a mental look at this huge mountain of yellowed pages, equipped at one time with the stamps of "Special Importance", "Top Secret", "The Only Copy", one cannot help but be surprised at the resolute shamelessness with which supporters of Soviet historical mythology continue to mutter about the "lack of genuine documents", "baseless fantasies", "fragments of memoirs taken out of context." Did they themselves find at least one piece of paper in which Stalin orders to strengthen peace throughout the world?

Deceive your own so that strangers do not guess

Comparing the documents at the district level with the general plan for the strategic deployment of the Red Army, we immediately notice one remarkable difference. District documents (directives of the people's commissar of defense and plans for the operational deployment of district / front troops developed on the basis of these directives) begin with one standard phrase, literally verbatim (or with tiny, purely stylistic differences, such as "keeping in mind" instead of "taking into account") repeating from document to document:

“Non-aggression pacts between the USSR and Germany, between the USSR and Italy at the present time, one can assume, ensure a peaceful situation on our western borders. The USSR does not think of attacking Germany and Italy. These states, apparently, also do not think of attacking the USSR in the near future. However, taking into account [..], when developing a plan for the defense of the USSR, it is necessary to keep in mind not only such adversaries as Finland, Romania, England, but also such possible adversaries as Germany, Italy and Japan.

In place, which I replaced with an ellipsis, there are growing - in chronological movement from November 1940 to April 1941 - claims against the pact partner: “suspicious behavior of the Germans in Romania and Finland”, “the entry of German troops into Bulgaria”, “concentration of German troops near the borders of the USSR”, “declaration of war on Yugoslavia and Greece”. However, the general conclusion remained unchanged until April 1941: along with such an old and undoubted enemy as England, Germany should also be kept in mind as a new “possible adversary.”

But in the main documents, in the plans for the strategic deployment of the Red Army, which People's Commissar Timoshenko submits to Stalin for consideration, there is nothing like this props! Starting from the summer of 1940 (the first of the documents listed above), only Germany (and its weak allies - Finland, Romania, Hungary) has been named as a potential enemy. Not a single word about England. Simply put, in an effort to conceal his true intentions as much as possible (in particular, the radical change in these intentions that occurred after the collapse of France), Stalin misinformed even his own senior command staff - up to the level of generals in the headquarters of the western districts / fronts. It's another one

touch to the question of "why the captured commanders did not tell the Germans about the Big Plan."

Unshakable foundations

As for the Grand Plan itself, from September 1940 to May 1941 it remained basically unchanged. All the variants of the general plan for the strategic deployment of the Red Army that have been declassified so far - as well as the plans for the operational deployment of troops of the districts / fronts that detail it - are in fact one and the same document. There is not only a semantic, but also a clear textual similarity of all these "considerations" and "notes". Like nesting dolls, the maps attached to text documents are similar to each other (today they are quite suitable for the well-known observation test "find five differences"). All documents are a description of the plan for the preparation and conduct of a large-scale offensive operation outside the state borders of the USSR. Strategic defense on one's own territory is not even considered as one of the possible options for action.

Strictly speaking, the note "On the Fundamentals of Strategic Deployment." written by Shaposhnikov himself (taking into account the fact that Meretskov replaced him as Chief of the General Staff in August 1940, this document is usually dated as "not later than August 15"), proposed an offensive plan . But somehow hesitantly offered. Shaposhnikov again (as in his report in March 1938) makes the choice of the direction of the main attack of the Red Army dependent on the probable plans of the enemy:

"Considering that the main blow of the Germans will be directed north of the mouth of the river. San, it is also necessary to have the main forces of the Red Army deployed north of Polesye. In the south, Western Ukraine and Bessarabia should be covered by active defense, and the largest possible part of the German army should be pinned down. The main task of our troops is: defeating the German forces concentrating in East Prussia and in the Warsaw region; defeat the enemy grouping in the region of Lublin, Grubeshuv, Tomashev, Sandomierz with an auxiliary strike.

With a strong desire, this can be called "planning a preemptive strike." Yes, and some kind of weak blow - a depth of 50 to 150 kilometers. But could it be stronger if Shaposhnikov once again, overestimating the strength of the Wehrmacht, plans an offensive without creating an initial quantitative superiority over the enemy ("from the Baltic Sea coast to the headwaters of the Pripyat River against possible 120–123 infantry and motorized divisions and 10 tank divisions Germans, we will have 89 rifle, 5 motorized and 3 cavalry divisions, 11 tank divisions, 7 separate tank brigades").

After the "tsarist colonel" was replaced as chief of the General Staff of the Red Army by young and energetic Soviet generals (Meretskov, and then Zhukov), they stopped giving the enemy the right to choose the scene of action. From September 1940 to May 1941, all variants of the strategic deployment plan determine the direction of the main attack solely from considerations of military-operational and political advantages for the advancing Red Army. The assessment of the probable plans of the German command (deployment by the Germans of the most powerful grouping to the north or south of the swamps of Polesye) changes several times, but this does not affect the plan of the planned offensive operation: "The deployment of the main

forces of the Red Army in the West with the grouping of the main forces against East Prussia and in the direction of Warsaw raises serious fears that the struggle on this front could lead to protracted battles, tie up our main forces, not give the desired and quick effect, and accelerate the entry of the Balkan countries into the war against us. The main reasons are: a) the difficult natural

conditions of East Prussia make it extremely difficult to conduct offensive operations, b) the serious preparation of this theater for defense, especially in engineering and road relations, c) strong resistance [of the enemy], which, of course, will be provided in the struggle for Eastern Prussia. The most advantageous is the deployment of our main forces

south of the river. Pripyat in order to defeat the main forces of the Germans with powerful blows on Lublin, Radom and Krakow and, in the very first stage of the war, cut Germany off from the Balkan countries, deprive it of important

economic bases and decisively influence the Balkan countries in matters of their participation in the war against us. The main forces of the Southwestern Front, in cooperation with the left wing of the Western Front, strike and decisively defeat Lublin, Radom, Sandomierz, the Krakow enemy grouping, force the river. Vistula, capture Krakow and Warsaw and go to the front of Warsaw, Lodz, Kreutzburn, Oppeln (now Klochbork and Opole. - **M.S.**)”.

Firstly, the March version of the strategic deployment plan is the only (of the currently available) document in which that cherished word finally appears, without which the very intention of "smashing the main German forces" hangs in the air.

To Berlin!

“The further strategic goal for the main forces of the Red Army, depending on the situation, can be set: to develop an operation through Poznan to Berlin, or to act to the southwest, to Prague and Vienna, or to strike [strike] to the north, to Torun and Danzig with the goal of Bypassing East Prussia.

Secondly, on the reverse side of the 27th page of the document, in a thin pencil, neat “beaded” handwriting (presumably by the hand of the First Deputy Chief of the General Staff Vatutin), the phrase: “Start the offensive on 12.6” is inscribed. This phrase has nothing to do with the context (it appears after the description of the task assigned to the “left wing of the main grouping of the Southwestern Front”) and generally seems inappropriate in a document where all chronological marks are expressed in conditional dates “tied” to the first day of the operation (“On the 3rd day of the operation, seize Sedlec with mobile units and on the 5th day the crossings on the Vistula River.”).

“The only thing new in Zhukov’s note is that in May 1941, the main command of the Red Army was no longer so sure that he would be able to forestall the enemy.” What was it? A careful analysis

of the document does not give, in my opinion, grounds for asserting that we are talking about June 12, 1941. The logic here is very simple - most of the mechanized (tank) formations mentioned in the March plan could not be combat-ready by June 1941. So, for example, in the 4th

According to the plan, three mechanized corps were included in the army of the Western Front. Their numbers are also inscribed with the same thin pencil: 13, 14 and 17. At the same time, the 14th mechanized corps (in accordance with the plan approved in February 1941) completed its formation only at the beginning of 1942; as for microns 13 and microns 17, they were at the very early stage of formation. Of course, the plans could be reconsidered, but where was the "extra" 2,000 tanks to be found by June

1941? Be that as it may, the very fact of establishing (or even just discussing) the calendar date for the start of the operation clearly indicates that there was no question of any "counterattacks in response to Hitler's aggression": they planned to start the war themselves, on a predetermined day and hour.

From complex to simple

Documents of the district level, repeating the main theses of the Grand Plan, specify in detail the tasks assigned to the armies and corps that are part of the district / front:

"The actions of the Western Front will result in a series of successive operations. In terms of time and space, they will develop as follows: The first operation, carried out in all cases.

1. The purpose of the operation is to cut off the Suwalki fortified ledge and destroy the enemy grouping concentrated in it.

2. The composition of the forces and means allocated for this. In peacetime, the German forces in the Suwalki region are defined as 3 infantry divisions, 1 cavalry brigade and tank units up to a division. With the declaration of war, the number of enemy infantry divisions can be doubled (in fact, by June 22, 1941, 9 infantry, 4 tank and 3 motorized infantry divisions of the Wehrmacht were concentrated on the Suwalki ledge. - M.S.) . Moreover, the sooner the operation begins, the less forces will be brought up by the enemy and the less forces will be required from our side. Parts of the 3rd Army enter the concentration area from the

2nd day of mobilization to the 11th day inclusive. Thus, the First operation can be started no earlier than on M-13. 3. The task of the 3rd Army. Having completed the concentration of the main forces in the

area of Sopotskin, Avgustov, Shchuchin, Grodno by M-11, in M-13 go to

offensive and in cooperation with the 11th Army of the North-Western Front (deployed in the Kaunas, Merkina zone. - M.S.), inflicting the main blow in the direction of Rachka, Bakalarzhevo, destroy the enemy's Suwalki grouping and on the M-16 reach the advanced defensive strip of East Prussian fortifications, where to go on the defensive. In the event of a favorable situation, be ready with the M-18 to proceed with its attack in the general direction of Prostken, Arys (now Ozhysh, Poland. - **M.S.**). Second operation.

The goal is to ensure the main operation of the front (attack on Warsaw and Radom. - **M.S.**) from the north by defeating the enemy in the defensive zone and to withdraw the troops of the 3rd Army to the main defensive zone of the East Prussian fortifications of the Germans. This operation will take place in the event that it is established before it begins that the forward defensive zone is poorly occupied by the Germans and in general there will be no strike from East Prussia in the near future. If, before the start of the Second Operation, it is determined that the Germans are preparing this strike, then the 3rd Army, without conducting the Second Operation, goes over to the defensive on the lines reached as a result of

the First Operation. The main operation of the front, depending on the developing situation, may have two

options: The first is in the event that the enemy concentrates the main forces in East Prussia against the Northwestern and Western fronts. With this option, the right wing and the center of the [Western] front, given that the enemy will have more than double superiority in forces, will go on the defensive, and a cluster of forces is created on the left wing of the front for offensive operations with the Southwestern Front. The 4th Army with part of the forces of the 13th Army with a short but strong blow in the general direction of Sedlec, Radom will assist the Southwestern Front in encircling and destroying the Sandomierz Lublin grouping of the enemy. The

second option - if before the 20th day of mobilization it is established that the main blow of the Germans is expected not from East Prussia, but against the Southwestern Front, then the Western Front, in the presence of double superiority in forces, goes on the offensive with all the main forces, excluding the right-flank [3rd] Army."

The tasks of the armies were formulated in such an ornate and complex way in the "Note on the Action Plan of the Western Front" (January 1941). By April, they changed their minds, they abandoned attempts to attack in two far divergent directions (on the left flank on Radom, on the right - on Suwalki). In the April directive of the People's Commissar of Defense, the tasks assigned to the Western Front are unequivocally formulated.

and clearly:

"With the transition of the armies of the Southwestern Front to the offensive with a blow from the left wing of the [Western] Front in the general direction to Sedlec, Radom will help the Southwestern Front to break the enemy's Lublin Radom grouping. To ensure the main blow of the front, deliver an auxiliary blow in the direction of Warsaw with the task of capturing Warsaw and putting the defense on the river. Narew. The stubborn defense of the armies of the right wing of the front in the sector of the river. Neman, Ostrolensk to firmly cover the Lida and Volkovysko-Baranovichi directions.

4th Army - striking in the direction of Drokhichin, Sedlec, Garvolin, force the river. Bug, break up the opposing enemy and take possession of the moving parts on the 3rd day of the Sedlec operation and on the 5th day of the crossings on the river. Vistula (125 km from Drohichyn); the main forces on the 8th day to reach the river. The Vistula is ready to cross it. In the future, keep in mind the actions on Radom. 13th Army - simultaneously

with the 4th Army, strike with the forces of at least seven rifle divisions and two mechanized corps in the direction of Kossov, Volomin with the goal of reaching the river. Vistula to ensure the attack of the 4th Army on Sedlec, Lublin from the north; in the future, by actions from the north, strive to capture Warsaw, the actions of mechanized corps with access to the river. Move the Vistula to the south to assist the 4th Army.

Before the troops of the 10th and 3rd armies (the center and the right flank of the front) the task was set: "defense on the front of the river. Neman, Shchuchin, Kolno, Novogrudok, to the river. Bug firmly cover Grodno and directions to Lida and Bialystok, Volkovysk.

Thundering with fire, sparkling with the brilliance of steel ...

Similar changes were made to the plan of action for the troops of the Baltic Special Military District (North-Western Front). IN

The "first" directive of the People's Commissar of Defense for the development of a plan for the operational deployment of the armies of the Baltic OVO (the document provides for Meretskov's signature, which makes it possible to date it as "no later than January 1941") was given such tasks:

"To concentrate troops by active actions to tie down the armed forces of the Germans in East Prussia and prevent their transfer to other sectors of the front, for which purpose be ready on the 25th day of mobilization to go on the offensive and, inflicting the main blow in the direction of Shikshay, Koenigsberg, in encircle and defeat the enemy in cooperation with the Western Front, and on the 35th day of the operation reach the front of Elbing, Osterode (now Elblag and Ostroda, Poland. - **M.S.**). By the 7th day of mobilization, be ready, on special instructions from the High Command, with reinforced cover troops of the 11th Army, supported by front aviation, in cooperation with the cover troops of the 3rd Army of the Western Front, to encircle and destroy parts of the German cover in the Suwalki area and go to the Shitkemen front , Bakalarzhevo".

But already in the March (1941) directive for the development of a plan for the operational deployment of PribOVO (and always further), the idea of an offensive in East Prussia (and even a private operation to "cut off" the Suwalki ledge) was abandoned. Now the armies of the North-Western Front are assigned purely defensive tasks:

"Relying on the fortified areas and on the lines prepared in peacetime, by stubborn defense to prevent the enemy from breaking through our fortified areas and invading our territory; have reserves in the Siauliai region and a strong grouping in the Kaunas, Mariampol (now Kapsukas. - **M.S.**), Alytus region, preparing its counterattack on Grodno in the event of an enemy breakthrough in the direction of Volkovysk. However, even here they did not hesitate to add: "In a favorable situation, be ready, at the direction of the High Command, for a sudden seizure of the enemy's fortified areas and the defeat of his grouping in East Prussia." And on the Southwestern

Front (Kiev OVO), in the zone of the planned main attack of the Red Army, everything was even simpler. From November 1940 to May 1941, in all known documents, one and only option is discussed - a grandiose

offensive in two main operational directions: on Lublin (together with the troops of the right flank of the Western Front) and on Krakow, Katowice. The March (1941) version of the plan for the strategic deployment of the Red Army set the following pace: on the 3rd day, occupy Lublin with "moving units" and on the 8th day - Krakow, "with the main forces" reach the Vistula River by the 10th day of the operation (that is, even for the infantry, an advance rate of the order of 10-12 km per day is planned).

If something changes from document to document, it is the composition of the forces deployed in Western Ukraine: from large to gigantic and further to something beyond.

So, on the operational map, signed on April 6, 1941 by the Deputy Chief of the Operational Directorate of the General Staff, Major General Anisov, we find 14 "diamonds" near the border line. Three mechanized corps of the 5th Army are deployed in the Lyuboml, Shatsk zone with the task of a frontal attack on Lublin. Seven mechanized corps of the 26th and 12th armies, huddled together on the border section from Mostisk to Sanok, are preparing to throw through Rzeszow, Krosno to Krakow, Katowice. Four mechanized corps of the 6th Army are deployed between these two strike groups, on the front of Rava-Russkaya, Radymno: two of them (judging by the map) will advance through Bilgoraj, Krasnik to the rear of the enemy's Lublin grouping, the other two will advance through Sandomierz on Kielce.

14 mechanized corps in the first echelon of the front (and there are also reserves, where three mechanized corps are concentrated in the Zlochev, Tarnopol, Proskurov zone) - this is 28 tank and 14 motorized divisions. But the Soviet "motorized" division of the spring of 1941 in its structure (one tank, one artillery, two motorized rifle regiments) corresponds to the German "tank", and in terms of the number of tanks (275 units) it significantly exceeds it. So, in fact, it was planned to concentrate 42 tank divisions (not in name, but in actual structure and armament) in a strip 250-300 kilometers long.

42 tank and motorized divisions in one front. How could all THIS fight? Move? Provide fuel? In June of the 41st, the Germans had only five tank divisions as part of Army Group South, and at the same time, in the first days of the war, advance through

the border along the Soviet "road directions" was only four; the fifth in a row (9th tank) was waiting for its turn to advance along the roads, already pretty broken by the first four. What could await the Soviet tank horde there, in which there should have been more tankmen alone than Batu Khan had horsemen? I recommend remembering these figures whenever "falsifiers in the interests of Russia" will tell with a sorrowful sob that "it was not possible to complete the planned rearmament of the army", "we did not have time to prepare for war."

However, God is with them, with falsifiers. Something else is more interesting. Even Soviet industry, whose "peaceful creative labor" did not subside from dawn to dusk and from dusk to dawn, did not have endless production possibilities. To create and equip an armored horde of 36,879 tanks with new materiel (this is the figure that flaunts in the last pre-war mobilization plan), it took another one and a half to two years. What, according to Comrade Stalin, was Hitler to do at that time? Trembling with fear, hide in a corner? Following the example of the Bolsheviks of the Leninist Guard, write to the Master of the letter: "Dear Comrade Stalin, I will die with your name on my lips."

From 6 April to 15 May

The fact that General Anisov signed on the next operational map with the next set of "arrows" and "diamonds" on April 6 is nothing more than an accident, but an almost symbolic accident. April 6, 1941 is one of the most mysterious days in the history of World War II. The main outline of events is well known. On the

night of March 26-27, a military coup took place in Yugoslavia, inspired by either the British or Soviet secret services. The new government of General Simovich announced its intention to give a firm rebuff to German claims and turned to the Soviet Union for help. On April 3 (that is, only a week after the coup), the delegation of the newborn government was already negotiating in Moscow on the conclusion of a treaty of friendship and cooperation, and with Stalin himself.

Despite the fact that Germany, through Ambassador Schulenburg, conveyed its displeasure to Molotov ("the moment for concluding a treaty with Yugoslavia was chosen unsuccessfully and causes an undesirable impression"), at 2.30 am on April 6, 1941, the Soviet-Yugoslav treaty was signed. A few hours after its signing, Luftwaffe aircraft subjected Belgrade to a fierce bombardment, and German troops invaded the territory of Yugoslavia. Within one week it was all over: the Yugoslav army was defeated, the country was destroyed and occupied. The Soviet Union did nothing to help its new friend. On April 6, Molotov received Schulenburg and, after listening to the official announcement of the Wehrmacht's invasion of Yugoslavia, limited himself to a melancholy remark: "It is extremely sad that, despite all efforts, the expansion of the war thus turned out to be inevitable." For what? Why was Stalin so defiantly

"teasing" Hitler, having no intention (and no practical possibility) to provide Yugoslavia with effective military assistance? A long-term discussion of historians has not yet brought us closer to an answer to this question. Only one thing is clear: after April 6, Germany and the USSR inevitably rolled towards war with each other. Hitler, prone to hysterics, did not forgive such a "scrap" to his sworn Moscow friend. And the Kremlin understood this too. May 5, 1941 Stalin appoints himself the formal head of the government of the USSR. The countdown to the explosion has begun.

In mid-May (on the map attached to the text document, the date "5/15/41" is clearly marked by Vasilevsky's hand) another version of "Considerations on the Strategic Deployment Plan" appears. Strictly speaking, this fifth (since August 1940) version of the war plan against Germany was no different from all the previous ones from the point of view of the operational plan. The May "Considerations" in terms of tasks, directions of the main attacks, timing and boundaries almost completely repeat the "Refined Strategic Deployment Plan" of March 11, 1941. However, there are at least two major differences.

One of them immediately catches the eye when looking at the operational map: there are much fewer "diamonds"! The offensive operation should take part "only" 10

mechanized corps. Three (6th, 13th and 14th) on the left flank of the Western Front, two (22nd and 19th) as part of the 5th Army of the Southwestern Front in the Lyuboml region, five (4, 15, 9, 8, 16- j) at the very tip of the Lvov ledge. At the time of the drafting of the Considerations, all these corpora already existed; some (6 microns, 4 microns, 15 microns, 8 microns) were also equipped with "new types" tanks, close to standard standards; three more (14th, 22nd, 16th) were armed with 500 or more tanks, that is, in this respect they were not inferior to a typical Soviet tank army of the period 1944-1945. In other words, the May 15th Considerations is the real war plan. The war is close, not abstract-theoretical. Secondly, only in the May

"Considerations" does the idea finally appear that Hitler, too, may have plans for delivering a preemptive strike: "Given that Germany currently keeps her army mobilized, with deployed rears, she has the opportunity to warn us in deployment and launch a surprise strike. That is why the authors of the document insistently suggest "in no case give the initiative to act to the German Command, preempt the enemy and attack the German army at the moment when it is in the deployment stage and has not yet had time to organize the front and the interaction of the military branches." Let us emphasize with the boldest line: there are no grounds for statements about any special "aggressiveness" of the May

"Considerations", even more so - about their "uniqueness", which opposes the invariably defensive plans of previous months and years. Nothing else, except for the intention to conduct a large-scale offensive operation west of the borders of the USSR, was never in the strategic plans of the General Staff of the Red Army (at least it has not been since December 1936, from the "Yegorov plan"). Nobody was going to give the enemy the advantage of the first strike. The starting point of the chronology of the operation is always, in all variants of the Grand Plan, the date of the beginning of one's own deployment, and not at all of the enemy's invasion.

What is fundamentally new in Zhukov's note is only that in May 1941, the High Command of the Red Army was no longer so sure that it would be able to forestall the enemy. Therefore it and

reminds Stalin of the need to carry out a set of measures (secretly mobilize troops under the guise of "training camps", begin a covert strategic regrouping of troops to the western border, relocate aviation from internal districts to the West, etc.), "without which it is impossible to deliver a sudden strike against the enemy as if from the air as well as on earth."

Finishing touches

Chronologically, the closest to the start of the war (again, from among those found by me) is the Air Force Action Plan of the Odessa Military District. The document was written by hand by the commander of the Air Force of the district, Major General Michugin, and signed on Wednesday, June 18, 1941. The black dawn of June 22 was only four days away. In the traditional way for Soviet military planning, General Michugin triples the enemy's forces ("on the territory of Romania on 1.5.41 there are Romanian aircraft up to 1000-1200. In addition, the 6th Air Fleet of the German Air Force is stationed on the territory of Romania, consisting of 2 divisions, 5 squadrons in each. According to the calculated data, we can assume the presence of up to 960 combat aircraft"). Then he formulates the problem and the way to solve it: "The nature of our actions. It is imperative that active actions cause significant damage to enemy aircraft. This could be achieved best of all by a powerful surprise strike against enemy aircraft at airfields. However, the enemy can preempt us." And what then to do? Abandon planes at airfields

and "relocate" to the rear, 500 kilometers from the front line? Nothing like this! "Then our first task will be to cover, withdraw aircraft from under attack, inflict maximum losses in air battles and deliver a powerful retaliatory strike against enemy aircraft at airfields. Our actions must be directed at the most important objects and necessarily by large forces. Under no circumstances should forces be dissipated. Our first strike must be directed: a) against enemy aviation at the airfield hubs of Bacau, Tecuci, Brailov, Buzau, Brasov, Ploiesti, Bucharest, Constanta; b) by rail

stations Buzau, Ploiesti and on the railway bridge over the river. Danube at Chernovody; c) by the port on the river. Danube at Brailov-Galati. It is imperative that the 4th Air Corps [Long-Range Aviation] immediately take over the following facilities: the Bucharest railway junction, oil refineries, oil depots.

In a similar document of the Air Force of the Western OVO (approved on June 11, 1941), the actions of aviation are described in great detail. "Based on the tasks set and the availability of bomber aviation, the district air force units can solve the following tasks: a) deliver a simultaneous strike on the established enemy airfields and bases located in the first zone, to the line of Insterburg (now Chernyakhovsk), Allenstein (now Olsztyn), Mlava, Warsaw, Deblin, covering the actions of bomber aircraft with fighter aircraft.

Calculation of the order of aircraft for strikes on airfields of the 1st zone. Bombing height $H = 3000$ m. Total 22 airfields. There are 142 units (111 SB units, 2 °Cu-2, 7 Ar-2, 4 Pe-2). Type of bombs - 50% FAB-100 and AO-25/20 each. 9 links each to strike at the airfields of Allenstein, Warsaw-Okentse, Sedlec, Demblin, Milosevic; 6 links each to strike at the airfields of Gumbinen, Suwalki, Letzen, Lytsk, Arys, Mlava.

Calculation of the order of aircraft for the destruction of railway junctions. Bombing height $H = 5000$ m. Type of bombs used: 70% FAB-250 and FAB-100, 30% FAB-50. The required number of hits and the estimated number of links: Koenigsberg - 120 hits, 60 links; Allenstein - 170 hits, 60 links; Warsaw - 80 hits, 60 links; Lodz - 80 hits, 40 links.

Even the briefest review of the history of Soviet military planning in the 1930s and 1940s would be incomplete without mentioning the vast Finnish border. Moreover, it was there that the arrows on the maps turned into a real war.

The border of the Soviet Union with sparsely populated (population - less than four million people) Finland stretches for 1300 kilometers - this is more than the strip of Western Europe between the shores of the North and Adriatic seas. The border begins in the swampy forests of the Karelian Isthmus, then goes through the deserted taiga of northern Karelia and ends in the tundra

Kola Peninsula. In such a theater of operations, everything is different than in the inhabited warm regions: in summer there is an endless day, in winter the night does not end, clouds of mosquitoes in June can devour a tank, in September heavy snow can fall. Combat operations are possible only along rare "road directions", separated from each other by tens or even hundreds of kilometers of impassable off-road. And in only one respect, the operational plans of the Soviet troops on the Finnish border did not differ in any way from similar documents of the western military districts / fronts - the "defense" was planned extremely active.

The terrible price of the shameful "Victory"

The scale of the operation, the decisiveness of the assigned tasks, and the size of the grouping of troops being created grew from one version of the plan for the war with Finland to another. The plan of 1936 provided for the concentration of five rifle divisions and two tank brigades on the Karelian Isthmus, and two rifle divisions in Karelia. With such forces, they planned to "defeat the enemy on the Karperesheik and take possession of the fortified area" (that is, the very Mannerheim line). The following year, 1937, along with the obvious task of "causing a decisive defeat of the Finnish army," it was planned to capture the Pechenga region (this is in the Arctic), Nurmes (central Finland), Sortavala. Composition of the group: eight rifle divisions, two tank brigades and three artillery regiments of the RGK on the Karelian Isthmus; two rifle and one mountain rifle divisions in Karelia and near Murmansk. "There was only one solution - to wait for a favorable

foreign policy situation and finish off the pernicious "boat".

Extremely interesting details are found in the assignment approved on March 17, 1939 to conduct a "two-sided operational game" at the headquarters of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet. In this document, the situation on the eve of the start of the conditional "hostilities" is described as follows: "A number of major border incidents with the Blues took place on the Karperesheyka on July 22–23, 1939 near the village of Mainila. At 10.00 24.07 in the area of the Kalbodagrund lighthouse, an unknown submarine (submarine) drowned the TR (transport) of the "reds." If we add to this that, according to the instructions for

If the "Reds" attack on the Karelian Isthmus begins on July 27 (four days after the "major border incidents"), then the clairvoyance of the drafters of the task is simply stunning.

Eight months before the "impudent provocation of the White Finnish military," they had already predicted both the geographical point of the provocation (the village of Mainila) and its essentially exact date ("the Mainil incident" occurred on November 26, 1939, that is, four days before the start of the "liberation campaign"). hike"). The "Unknown submarine" also did not remain idle: on September 27, 1939, at the time of the start of negotiations with the Estonian delegation in Moscow, Soviet radio (and then central newspapers) reported the sinking of the Soviet cargo ship Metallist off the coast of Estonia. But Estonia, unlike Finland, succumbed to Stalin's dictatorship without a fight, the war on the southern coast of the Gulf of Finland did not start, and it was ordered to forget about the sunken Metallist.

In the late autumn of 1939, the time for "games" ended. On October 29, 1939, the commander of the troops of the Leningrad Military District, commander of the 2nd rank Meretskov, sent memorandum No. 4587 to the People's Commissar of Defense Voroshilov. Paragraph 5 read: "The plan of operation is outlined as follows. Upon receipt of an offensive order, our troops simultaneously invade Finnish territory in all directions in order to separate the enemy force grouping and, in cooperation with aviation, inflict a decisive defeat on the Finnish army. The main forces of our troops strike from the Vidlitsa (Vidlitsa - a village on the eastern shore of Lake Ladoga. - **M.S.**) direction and from the Karelian Isthmus smash the main grouping of the Finnish army in the area of Sortavala, Viipuri (Vyborg), Kyakisalmi (Kexholm, now Priozersk). »

Access to the Vyborg, Imatra, Sortavala line (which roughly corresponds to the current border between Russia and Finland) was understood by the developers of the plan only as the first task of the troops. In paragraph 6-6 we read: "After completing this task, be ready for further actions inland according to the situation." To create the desired "environment" Meretskov plans to deploy a group of troops consisting of 20 rifle divisions, three tank brigades, six

artillery regiments of the RGK. "These measures ensure the conduct of the operation in the Vidlitsky direction within 15 days, in the Karperesheyka 8-10 days, with an average advance of troops of 10-12 km per day." The high command slightly tweaked the "Meretskov plan", and in fact, by the beginning of the invasion (November 30, 1939), 20 rifle divisions and one rifle machine-gun brigade, five tank brigades (and a total of 1479 tanks), seven artillery regiments of the RGK, 2446 aircraft were concentrated near the Finnish border (including the KBF Air Force). What happened

next is well known and is now described in detail in scientific, historical and memoir literature. Neither in 8, nor in 10, nor in 15 days did it succeed in "causing a decisive defeat of the Finnish army". The war dragged on for more than three months. Immediately after the end of hostilities, the losses of Soviet troops were estimated at 64,000 killed, 190,000 wounded, 76,000 frostbitten and ill. Subsequently, 16.3 thousand deaths in hospitals were added to the number of irretrievable losses, and the number of those killed, calculated according to the nominal lists, amounted to 71.2 thousand people. In addition, 39.4 thousand people (a fantastic figure for an offensive operation on the territory that later became "their own") disappeared forever without

lead.

Total - 127 thousand dead. The Germans during the occupation of Norway (April-May 1940) irretrievably lost 5666 people, and in total in the operations of the initial period of the Second World War, that is, during the occupation of Poland, France, Belgium, Holland, Norway, Yugoslavia and Greece - 74.5 thousand people.

"Invade, destroy and take possession..."

What conclusions were drawn in the Kremlin from the lesson paid for by a sea of blood? There was only one solution - to wait for a favorable foreign policy situation (in March 1940, the prospect of the intervention of the Western allies in the Soviet-Finnish war became too real) and to finish off the malicious "boat".

Preparations for a new invasion are clearly visible already in the terms of the peace treaty (signed in Moscow on the night of March 12-13, 1940). The Soviet Union annexed 37 thousand square kilometers of Finnish land (excluding water areas), which is 13 times more

what Stalin demanded in the negotiations in October 1939, and about five times the territory captured by force of arms during the Winter War. The Finns lost their natural (the chain of lakes of the Vuoksa River, the northern shore of Lake Ladoga) and man-made (the Mannerheim Line) defensive lines. Thanks to the thoughtfully drawn line of the new border, the railway system of southeastern Finland was torn apart, which made it difficult for the Finnish army to maneuver in the zone of the future main attack of the Red Army. Article 7 of the peace treaty obliged Finland to build a

railway connecting the city of Kemijärvi with the now border town of Salla. At first glance, this is a very strange demand: what does the winner care about where the half-dead vanquished will (if he is) build his railways? The second look at the geographical map immediately puts everything in its place: the appearance of the Kemijärvi-Salla section made it possible to provide a direct railway connection from the new border to the Finnish coast of the Gulf of Bothnia, which solved the problem of supplying the grouping of Soviet troops advancing inland (the idea of a breakthrough to the Gulf of Bothnia was invariably present in all variants of the war plan with Finland). Six months after the signing of the peace treaty, on September 18, 1940, People's Commissar of Defense Tymoshenko sent Stalin

memorandum No. 103203 - "Considerations on the deployment of the Red Army Armed Forces in the event of a war with Finland." This time, the most decisive considerations were expressed about the fate of Finland: "A strike by the main forces of the Northwestern Front through Savonlinna to San Michel (Mikkeli) and through Lappeenranta to Heinola, bypassing the fortifications created in the Helsingfors direction, and a simultaneous strike from Vyborg through Sippola on Helsingfors (Helsinki) to invade central Finland, defeat the main forces of the Finnish army here and capture the central part of Finland. This strike should be combined with an attack on Helsingfors from the side of the Hanko Peninsula and with the actions of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet in the Gulf of Finland. Resolute actions on the directions of Rovaniemi - Kemi and on Uleaborg (Oulu) to reach the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia.

For a new war with Finland, it was supposed to deploy 46 rifle divisions, 13 artillery regiments of the RGK, one mechanized corps and three tank brigades, 78 air regiments (!), And a total of 3900 aircraft. But that's not all. "In the reserve of the High Command to have in the area of Tikhvin, Volkhovstroy, Chudovo - 2 rifle divisions", as well as "to prepare and have in the reserve of the High Command at the points of permanent deployment seven rifle divisions from the Western and Kiev military districts, and a total of 14 lines of divisions ". The time when the document

was drawn up deserves close attention: France had already been utterly defeated by that moment, England, throwing the last fighter squadrons into battle, desperately fought off the German air offensive. In such a situation, Finland could not even think about possible assistance from the Western allies. As for the notorious "entry of German troops into the territory of Finland" (Soviet historians call the fact of the transit of the German anti-aircraft division - several hundred people and a dozen guns through Finland to Norway) with such words, this transit began on September 22, that is, after the intention to invade, destroy and take possession was formalized in a report addressed to Stalin. However, the developers of the "Considerations" do not use the words "German", "German" in any case, and the war plan is developed by them without any connection with the presence of foreign troops on the territory of Finland.

It is worth noting that on the same day, September 18, 1940, Timoshenko sent Stalin a memorandum "On the basics of the deployment of the Armed Forces of the USSR" ("the second version of the Grand Plan" according to the list indicated in the previous sections of this article). In this document, "to conduct operations in the West" 146 rifle divisions and 159 aviation regiments were assigned, having 6422 aircraft as of September 15. In other words, the forces planned for the invasion of Finland, devastated and bloodless by the previous war, were: in terms of the number of rifle divisions - one third, in terms of the number of air regiments and aircraft - half of what was supposed to be deployed for the war with the incomparably more powerful and numerous army of Germany and its southern allies

(Romania and Hungary). I must admit right away that I have no reasonable explanation

for such proportions. On October 5, "Considerations" about the war against Finland were reported to Stalin. A few days later (there is no exact date on the document) a memorandum No. 103313 signed by Timoshenko and Meretskov appears. It begins with a rather strange phrase: "I report for your approval the main conclusions from your instructions given on October 5, 1940." Without digressing into a discussion of stylistic flaws, let's go straight to paragraph 7, where it was said: "Approve the submitted considerations for the development of private deployment plans for military operations against Finland, against Romania and against Turkey." The last two are still unavailable, but the progress of the further development of the plan for the invasion of Finland can be seen quite clearly.

On November 25, 1940, the "Directive of the NPO of the USSR and the General Staff of the Red Army to the commander of the troops of the Leningrad Military District" appears. The directive of November 25 is not "Considerations", but an order from the higher command to subordinates: "I order to begin developing a plan for the operational deployment of the troops of the North-Western Front, guided by the following instructions." Probably, on the same or one of the next days, a similar directive was issued to the commander of the troops of the Arkhangelsk Military District (there is no exact date on the document). Both directives begin with the phrase "In the conditions of the war of the USSR only against Finland (in the directive for the Arkhangelsk district: "In the event of an isolated war between the USSR and Finland"), two fronts are created for the convenience of command and material support for the troops." The command of the LenVO was to create and lead the North-Western Front, and the command of the ArchVO - the Northern Front.

The concept of the operation, the goals and objectives of the troops, the stages and frontiers of advance remained practically unchanged (in comparison with the "Considerations" of September 18). The only innovation was a noticeable increase in the number of tank and motorized brigades (from 3 to 9) and RGK artillery regiments (from 12 to 16). In addition, quite specific deadlines appear in the directives for the "final solution" of the Finnish question:

"I set the main tasks for the North-Western Front: the defeat of the armed forces of Finland, the capture of its territory within the boundaries [with the Northern Front] and access to the Gulf of Bothnia on the 45th day of the operation. on the 35th day of the operation, capture Helsingfors (Helsinki). On the right, the Northern Front (Kandalaksha headquarters) on the 40th day of mobilization goes on the offensive and on the 30th day of the operation captures the Kemi, Uleaborg region. The command of the LenVO had to complete the

development of the operational plan by February 15, 1941, the command of the ArchVO - by March 1. It can be assumed that the indicated deadlines were met, since in March 1941 the General Staff moves on to the next stage of working out the war plan: from March 12 to March 20, "field trips" of command personnel are carried out in the Leningrad District. In particular, the command of the Ural Military District was ordered to "form the management of the 19th Army for the game" and arrive on March 10 in Kexholm (Priozersk). The command of the Oryol Military District should form the management of the "7th Army for the game" and arrive in Vyborg on March 11.

If you do not know the content of previous documents, then it looks very strange. Where is Orel, and where is Vyborg? And there is nothing to be surprised, everything here is quite logical. In accordance with the "Considerations" of September 18 and the directive of November 25, the North-Western Front included the 20th Army, deployed on the basis of the administration and troops of the Oryol Military District, with headquarters in Vyborg. So they went there in order to figure out on the spot how to "break through the enemy's fortified front and, in cooperation with the 23rd Army and 1st MK, on the 35th day of the operation, capture the Helsingfors area." And on the basis of the administration and troops of the Ural Military District, the 22nd Army was deployed. With headquarters in Kexholm, where the command of the UrVO went for the "game" in March 1941. You can learn about the tasks solved during the "field trips" that took

place without even referring to the secret archives. In the quite official "History of the Leningrad Military Order" published back in 1968, we read: "Field trips on the Karelian Isthmus and the Kola Peninsula were instructive, during which the nature of the modern offensive operation and combat in the conditions of a wooded and swampy area on the scale of the army, corps and

divisions."

An interesting detail: on April 3, 1941, Vasilevsky sent directive No. OU / 340 to the chief of staff of the Leningrad District, which ordered: "By April 10, submit to the Operational Directorate of the General Staff an act for the destruction of the assignment and full maps for them on a field trip to the LVO in March 1941 All undestroyed assignments and cards filled with them should be returned to the Operational Directorate of the General Staff. These documents did not lie in the garden on a bench in Leningrad either, but even a sealed safe in the guarded premises of the district headquarters seems to be an insufficiently reliable place to store SUCH secrets.

March all around!

Literally a few weeks after the "field trips", the command was issued: "Set aside!". The directive of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR to develop a plan for the operational deployment of troops of the Leningrad Military District (written by Vasilevsky on April 11, 1941) sets fundamentally new defensive tasks for the troops of the district: "By firmly defending the Vyborg and Keksgolm directions, to ensure reliable defense of Leningrad. prevent the enemy troops from reaching Lake Ladoga. covering the state border in northern Karelia, to ensure the normal operation of the Murmansk railway." And nothing more.

Another noteworthy document is addressed to the People's Commissar of the USSR Navy. It was written by Vasilevsky's hand, "the signatures" of Tymoshenko

and Zhukov are "filled in", there is no date or number: "The plans for the deployment and combat operations of the navy that I have considered in the event of an attack on our borders have a number of shortcomings. To eliminate these shortcomings, it is necessary by [missing in the manuscript] July 1941 to rework the operational plans of the fleets. When reworking, make the following clarifications to the tasks and plans for the combat use of fleets. Until Finland enters the war against the USSR, military operations against it should not be opened. To exclude from the tasks of the Baltic Fleet the landing on the Aland Islands and any attempts by the fleet to capture these islands.

From mid-April 1941, quite simultaneously with the change in top secret plans, a demonstrative "thaw" began in Soviet-Finnish relations. Here it must be clarified that in January-February 1941, these relations reached the level of mutual recall of ambassadors, which can be considered the penultimate step on the ladder leading to war. And in April, the ambassador of the Soviet Union returned to Finland, and he was a new person: instead of Comrade Zotov, who diligently played the role of an "evil investigator", Comrade Orlov, a "kind and docile" Comrade, arrived in Helsinki. Simultaneously with the actual restoration of diplomatic relations, radio stations stopped inflammatory radio propaganda in Finnish. Finally, on May 30, 1941, Stalin himself met with the Finnish ambassador Paasikivi and told him verbatim the following: "I will do you a personal friendly favor - I will give you 20,000 tons of

grain, half of which Finland will receive immediately." The service is really expensive, given that in January the USSR unilaterally denounced the trade agreement and stopped grain supplies, which put Finland (even with a good harvest of its own, the forest country imported 20 thousand tons of grain per month) to the brink of starvation.

Today, taking into account the Grand Plan, which has become known in all details, the "abrupt turn" that took place in April (refusal to implement detailed plans for the invasion of Finland) becomes quite understandable and understandable: on the eve of a large-scale war with Germany and its southern allies, Stalin decided not to be distracted (and not divert fifty divisions and almost four thousand combat aircraft) to solve a long overdue, but still insignificant task.

Political decision

Let's summarize. Over the past 20 years, it has been possible to identify a large group of interrelated documents that gradually reflect the development of operational plans for the Red Army at the turn of the 30s and 40s. All these plans are offensive plans (invading the territory of neighboring states). Since the summer of 1940, all

variants of the Grand Plan represent a single document, only in minor details changing from month to month.

No other plans have ever been found. Considering that there were many people who wanted to find a "strategic defense plan" or at least the notorious "counterattack in response to Hitler's aggression" and all the country's archives were and remain at their disposal, it can be argued with a 99.99 percent probability that there is simply no other plan. What

do our opponents, the supporters of the traditional version of the "invariably peaceful" foreign policy of the Soviet state, have to object to this? After carefully (or not so much) reading a long, long list of orders, directives, memorandums, materials of command and staff "games", exercises and "field trips", numbers and descriptions of archival files, they utter a long-learned phrase in a firm voice: "Well, you see, you don't have any documentary evidence." If you can manage not to fall off your chair in amazement,

then the "traditionalists" may agree to clarify their position. You will hear that the directives of the People's Commissar of Defense, the plans for the operational deployment of troops, stretching to Krakow, Warsaw, Helsinki, red arrows on top secret maps - all this is nonsense, "empty pieces of paper, not binding anyone to anything." But what is needed? But what is needed is a Principal Political Decision (PPR), that is, a paper with Stalin's signature and his own hand-written indication that this particular decision should be considered principled and political - there is no way without it.

It's funny, but after repeating their "irresistible argument" hundreds of times, the traditionalists never bothered to give at least one sample of the PPR (personally, I would especially like to get acquainted with the PPR, in which Stalin orders to strengthen world peace). It is in the context of the delusional discussion about the PPR that the example of the Soviet-Finnish war of 1939-1940 is especially indicative. There was a war. Unfortunately, this is an absolutely reliable fact, confirmed by the tragic fate of hundreds of thousands of Red Army soldiers. But besides, no one "political decision to attack Finland" personally signed by Stalin, no one

found. And he won't find it. And has anyone seen Stalin's signature on the "political decision" on the conclusion of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact?

At this point, minimally decent traditionalists "slow down" and no longer so loudly ask the second of the two "irresistible" questions: "Where is Stalin's signature on the documents of the military leadership you mentioned?" The question is interesting, and we will consider

it in two possible planes. From the point of view of bureaucratic idiocy, the answer can only be a counter question: "And in what place of the directive of the People's Commissar of Defense should (had the right) to sign a deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR Comrade Dzhugashvili (Stalin)? Who even dared to show him a top secret document of special importance? Until May 5, 1941, Stalin did not hold any public office. He was not in military

service, had no command ranks. Even two other secretaries of the Central Committee (Zhdanov and Malenkov) were listed as "members of the Supreme Military Council". In accordance with the Stalinist Constitution, the right to decide on issues of war and peace belonged to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, and in between sessions, to the Presidium of the Supreme Court, headed by the "nationwide headman" Kalinin. Strange, but none of the traditionalists requires Kalinin's signature. From the point of view of common sense and minimal knowledge of the conditions of the era, the answer is even simpler. "The

dictatorship of the proletariat is power based on direct violence; power not bound by any laws. Ulyanov (Lenin) proclaimed this with satanic pride. Comrade Stalin did not say this out loud, but he implemented it by 200 percent. Stalin's empire lived not according to laws, but according to concepts. The concepts were established, canceled and changed by the Leader of the Peoples himself. The most important decisions were made by a narrow circle of no one (except Stalin himself) authorized persons, bypassing all constitutional norms. In such a situation, talking about "signatures" is no more appropriate than trying to find a plan to rob a bank, signed by all members of the gang and sealed with an imprint of the gold "seal" of the leader. Everyone who participated in the development of strategic plans for the use of the Armed Forces of the USSR (and there were fewer of these

"all"

ten people), knew each other by sight, knew the handwriting in which these "Considerations" and directives were written in a single copy. They knew exactly who was in charge here, who makes decisions, points and punishes. Among "all" there was not a single one who would dare to demand a written order from Stalin. With such an organization of work, there was simply no practical need for Stalin's approving signatures. And the entire Soviet people were widely informed about the Fundamental Political Decisions he had adopted. Millions of funerals

W. Daines. No declaration of war

On December 18, 1940, a man who imagined himself the ruler of the world signed his death warrant. On this day, Fuhrer Adolf Hitler approved the "Barbarossa Fall" (the plan for Operation Barbarossa). The choice of the name was not accidental. The German king, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa (Barbarossa, literally "red-bearded") lived in the 12th century. He repeatedly made military campaigns in Italy. Under him, the Holy Roman Empire reached its highest outward splendor. But his policy of maneuvering between rival factions in Germany helped to strengthen the position of the princes and further weaken royal power. Frederick I Barbarossa died during the Third Crusade (he drowned in the Salefa River in Asia Minor). In Germany, a legend was spread that the emperor did not drown, but was sleeping at the bottom of the river, in order to someday appear again and glorify Germany. Undoubtedly, Hitler believed that the Barbarossa plan would glorify Nazi Germany. For the plan was designed for a lightning victory, for a blitzkrieg. After all, any sane strategist will not plan a war for a long time. Therefore, blitzkrieg has always been held in high esteem by the aggressors. The blitzkrieg theory was developed at the beginning of the 20th century and formed the basis of Germany's military

strategy. It justified the possibility of avoiding a protracted war, excluding a fight on two fronts, defeating opponents one by one, and achieving victory in the presence of less economic and military potentials than theirs through the massive use of the latest weapons and military equipment. At the same time, emphasis was placed on the use of tank formations, mechanized and dive bombers of the Luftwaffe. By joint efforts, tanks, motorized infantry and aviation were supposed to break a gap in the enemy's defenses, break through to the rear, and defeat command and control centers. It is very similar to the theory of a deep operation developed in the 30s of the last century in the Red Army.

However, Hitler and the headquarters of the operational leadership of the Supreme High Command of the Armed Forces (OKW - from *him*. Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht - the Supreme High Command of the Wehrmacht) did not take into account or did not want to take into account the fact that the nature of war in the 20th century had seriously changed. Massive armies of many millions, a high level of fortification, new military equipment and weapons, and the presence of significant strategic reserves required a different approach when developing a war plan. The calculation for a quick victory was possible only against a weak enemy, who had a small territory and insufficient manpower and materiel. Hitler considered the Soviet Union as such. The grounds for this, frankly, were, which will be discussed below. However, they were not decisive, and the new "ruler" miscalculated cruelly, underestimating the military-economic and moral-political potentials of the Soviet Union, its ability to build up the combat power of the Red Army, as well as the factors of time and space.

So, what did "Barbarossa Fall" envision? Before signing this plan, from November 29 to December 7, 1940, the first oberkvartmeister Major General F. Paulus (the future Field Marshal General, who suffered a crushing defeat at Stalingrad) was held at the General Staff of the German Ground Forces. ^{military} ~~General Staff~~ ^{leader} ~~General Staff~~ November 29 to December 7, 1940. This game tested specific developments for the plan of war with the Soviet Union. At the first stage, the invasion of the Wehrmacht troops into the border zone of the USSR was played out, and a "discussion of operational capabilities after reaching the first operational goal" was held [73]. At the second stage, the actions of the German troops were practiced during their offensive to the line of Minsk, Kiev, and at the third - beyond this border [74]

— .

The results of the war game were discussed on December 13 with the highest command personnel and taken into account in the final version of the plan of attack on the USSR, in Directive No. 21 of December 18, 1940. In it, the German armed forces were tasked with [75] "defeating Soviet Russia during one short-term campaign." The idea was to quickly and deeply strike powerful mobile groups north and south of the Pripyat swamps

split the front of the main forces of the Red Army, concentrated in the western part of Russia, and, using this breakthrough, destroy the disunited groupings of Soviet troops. At the same time, it was planned to destroy the main forces of the Red Army to the west of the Western Dvina and Dnieper lines, preventing them from retreating into the interior of the country. In the future, it was planned to take possession of the main strategic objects - Moscow, Leningrad, the Central Industrial Region, Donbass and reach the Arkhangelsk, Volga, Astrakhan line. The ultimate goal of the campaign was to create a "barrier against Asiatic Russia along the Volga-Astrakhan line."

The decisive role in the implementation of this plan was assigned to tank troops and aviation. The first blow was planned to be delivered by the forces of Army Group North (16th, 18th armies and 4th tank group) from East Prussia to Leningrad. A total of 29 divisions, including 6 armored and motorized. The advance of Army Group North was supported by the 1st Air Fleet, which had 1,070 combat aircraft. The second blow was delivered by the troops of Army Group Center (4th and 9th armies, 2nd and 3rd tank groups) from the Warsaw region to Minsk, Smolensk and further to Moscow. In total, 50 divisions were concentrated in the central direction, including 15 tank and motorized, as well as 2 motorized brigades. The actions of Army Group Center were supported by the 2nd Air Fleet, which numbered up to 1680 combat aircraft. The third blow was planned to be delivered by the South Army Group (German 6th, 17th, 11th armies, 1st tank group, Romanian 3rd and 4th armies and a mobile Hungarian corps) from the Lublin region to Zhitomir, Kiev and further to Donbass. In total, 57 divisions were involved in this direction, including 9 tank and motorized divisions, and 13 brigades. Army Group South was supported by the German 4th Air Fleet (about 800 aircraft) and the Romanian Air Force (up to 500 aircraft). The plan for a military attack on the Soviet Union was skillfully

covered up by disinformation measures. On Hitler's instructions, the Chief of the General Staff of the Supreme High Command, Field Marshal W. Keitel, signed on February 15, 1941 a special "Directive on disinformation of the enemy." In accordance with it, the intelligence and counterintelligence department of the headquarters developed

and carried out numerous actions to spread false rumors and information. The movement of troops to the east was presented "in the light of the greatest disinformation maneuver in history to divert attention from the latest preparations for the invasion of England." The topographic materials of England were printed and distributed in mass quantities. Interpreters were assigned to the English troops. At the same time, a "cordon" was being prepared for some areas on the coast of the English Channel, Pas de Calais and in information about the imaginary airborne corps was Norway, and language. also disseminated. On the coast, false rocket batteries were installed. Information circulated among the troops in two versions: in the first, that they were going on vacation before the invasion of England, in the second, that German formations would be passed through Soviet territory to oppose India. To reinforce the version of the landing in England, special operations were developed under the code names "Shark" and "Harpoon". Propaganda fell upon England in its entirety and ceased its usual attacks on the Soviet Union. As always, diplomats got involved.

In connection with Hitler's decision to expand the scope of Operation Marita (the attack on Greece), the plan for Operation Barbarossa was amended on 7 April to postpone its start to a later date and to complete all preparatory measures by approximately 22 June 1941. day, according to the decision taken on April 30 at a meeting of the highest command of the Wehrmacht, it was planned to start the eastern campaign. The Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces, Field Marshal W. Brauchitsch, assured the Fuhrer that the Red Army would be defeated in the course of "fierce border battles" in four weeks, after which "only insignificant resistance would have to be reckoned with"[76] . In turn, the Chief of the General Staff of the Ground Forces, Colonel-General F. Halder, said: "Soviet Russia is like window glass: you only need to hit it with your fist once, and it will all shatter to pieces"[77] . According to all the top military leaders of that time, the General Staff of the Red Army did not have data on the plans of a potential enemy. Rather, Soviet intelligence managed

obtain some, but not all, information about the preparations for an attack on the USSR. But

this was not the main thing in the difficult outcome of the border battles in the summer of 1941. The greatest leader of all times and peoples, I. V. Stalin, in late 1940 - early 1941, stood at a crossroads - to attack or defend? He pondered for a long time, so long that in the summer of forty-one he had to pay a high price for indecision. And, if someone believes that decisions at that time were made collectively, then this is a deep delusion. The leader is always alone, and only he manages affairs, even if he has a fallback option in his pocket - a collegial body. We will also say that there was an option - to deliver a preemptive strike against an aggressor ready to attack. For some reason, everyone is ashamed of this: no matter how they are accused of aggression! What, we ask, aggression? By June 22, 1941, German troops were not on their own territory, but on the land they had captured as a result of the attack on Poland or on the land of their allies. And if the Red Army had delivered a preemptive strike, it would not have hit German territory. After all, no one will wait for the moment when the snake makes a throw and stings. The best way to protect yourself is to strike at a reptile that is ready to throw, or, in extreme cases, run away, if, of course, you succeed.

So, Stalin regularly received various data from various sources about the military preparations of Germany. Not all of them were reliable, others contradicted previously obtained information, and even bordered on the truth. It is difficult, as a former intelligence officer, to evaluate the entire set of data and draw the necessary, correct conclusion. So, in

March 1941, the Soviet military attache in Belgrade reported that Germany had abandoned the attack on the British Isles and the immediate task was "the capture of Ukraine and

Baku, which should be carried out in April-May of this year" [78]. In the same month, on the 20th, the head of the Main Intelligence Directorate, General F. I. Golikov, submitted a report to I. V. Stalin, which outlined the options for possible directions of attacks by Wehrmacht troops during an attack on the Soviet Union. As it turned out later, they reflected the outlines of actions under the Barbarossa plan, and one of the options, in essence, contained the essence of this plan. However, the conclusions drawn by Golikov from

information given in the report, essentially devalued all their significance and misled Stalin: "1. Based on all the above

statements and possible options for action in the spring of this year, I believe that the most possible date for the start of actions against the USSR will be the moment after the victory over England or after the conclusion of an honorable peace for Germany with her.

2. Rumors and documents that speak of the inevitability of a war against the USSR this spring must be regarded as disinformation coming from British and even, perhaps, German intelligence"[79] .

Thus, General Golikov actually fell under the spell Keitel's directives on disinformation of the Soviet leadership.

On April 10, Stalin was presented with undercover data on the alleged start of German military operations against the USSR at the end of June. Marshal of the Soviet Union G.K. Zhukov, who in 1941 held the post of Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army, preparing in 1956 for a speech at the Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU, noted that I.V. Stalin and the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars

V. M. Molotov knew about the concentration of German troops near the Soviet borders. As an example, Zhukov referred to his report sent to Molotov. It cited examples of massive violations of the state border of the USSR by German aircraft during the period from 1 to 10 April. The flights were carried out to a depth of 90-200 km from the border in order to collect intelligence information and photograph the area. The Chief of the General Staff asked the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars "to report this question to Comrade. Stalin and take possible measures"[80] . Despite intelligence data about a possible enemy attack on June 15, 22 of

25, Stalin believed that in a situation close to the victorious conclusion of the war with England, Hitler would not go to a disastrous war for Germany on two fronts. In addition, Stalin believed that the British government was extremely interested in provoking a German war against the USSR. Therefore, he assessed as provocative the memorandum of the British government dated April 18 (it said that in the event of a protracted war

Great Britain may come to the idea of ending it on German terms) and a letter delivered to him on April 19 by W. Churchill containing a warning about Germany's intensive preparations for an attack on the USSR.

What did the General Staff do on the eve of Nazi Germany's attack on the Soviet Union? We have already

said that from November 29 to December 7, a military game was held at the General Staff of the Wehrmacht Ground Forces to test the developments for the plan of attack on the Soviet Union. Significant events also took place in the Red Army at the end of the fortieth year. At the end of December, a meeting of the highest command staff of the Red Army was held in Moscow. Its participants were leading employees of the People's Commissariat of Defense and the General Staff, heads of Central Directorates, commanders, members of military councils and chiefs of staff of military districts, armies, heads of military academies, inspector generals of military branches, commanders of some corps, divisions, in total more than 270 people[81] .—

At the meeting, the reports were presented by the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army, General of the Army K. A. Meretskov on the topic "Results and tasks of combat training of the ground forces, the Air Force and the operational training of senior command personnel", the head of the Main Directorate of the Red Army Air Force, Lieutenant General of Aviation P. V. Rychagov on the topic "The Air Force in an offensive operation and in the struggle for air supremacy", the commander of the Kiev Special Military District, General of the Army G.K. Zhukov, on the topic "The nature of a modern offensive operation", the commander of the troops of the Moscow Military District, General of the Army I. V. Tyulenev on the topic "The nature of a modern defensive operation", Commander of the Western Special Military District, General of the Army D. G. Pavlov on the topic "The use of mechanized formations in a modern offensive operation and the introduction of a mechanized corps into a breakthrough", Inspector General of the Infantry Lieutenant General A K. Smirnov is not the subject of "Combat of a rifle division in the offensive and defense."

On the whole, the conference drew correct conclusions about the nature and qualitative features of a possible war, defined fundamental views on an offensive operation, and the massive use of the latest means of armed struggle.

However, in the closing speech of the People's Commissar of Defense, Marshal of the Soviet Union S.K. Timoshenko, not entirely flawless judgments were expressed. His conclusion that "in the sense of strategic creativity, the experience of the war in Europe, perhaps, does not give anything new" is bewildering. Indeed, by that time it was already clear to many that this war, with its military-political plans, methods of unleashing, the scale, depth and speed of operations, the integrated use of the armed forces and combat arms to achieve political and strategic goals, marked a qualitatively new stage in the development of military art. Immediately after the meeting, under the

leadership of Marshal S.K. Timoshenko, two bilateral operational-strategic card games were held[82] . By this time, the General Staff of the Red Army did not have reliable data on the plans of a potential enemy. Therefore, the basis of the tasks of operational strategic games was information about the possible plans of Nazi Germany, outdated by that time. During the first game, which took place on January 2–6, 1941, the "eastern" (North-Western Front)

was commanded by General of the Army D. G. Pavlov, and the "Western" (North-Eastern Front of a potential enemy in the war) was commanded by General of the Army G K. Zhukov. According to the terms of the game, the "Western" in alliance with the "North-Western", "Northern" and "South-Western" opposed the "Eastern". They preempted the "Eastern" in deployment and on July 15, 1941 launched an offensive. Why did the offensive of the mock enemy begin on July 15? The Soviet leadership considered this period the most likely start of a German attack on the USSR. The main attack of the "Western", having a significant advantage in forces

and means, was delivered south of Brest in the direction of Vladimir Volynsky, Ternopil. To the north of Deblin to the Baltic Sea, the "Western", united in the Eastern and North-Eastern Fronts, in the interests of the main attack, went on the offensive with the task of defeating the Belostok-Volkovysk and Kaunas groupings of the "Eastern" and by the end of the conditional date, August 15, to reach line Baranovichy - Dvinsk - Riga.

The troops of the North-Eastern Front of the "Western", having crossed the state border, went deep into the depths of 70-120 km, but under

with counterattacks, the "Eastern" began to retreat to a line prepared in advance for defense, with the task of holding back the advance of the "Eastern" before the reserves approached. In turn, the North-Western Front of the "Eastern", having repelled the offensive of the "Western", went to the line of the state border and received the task of defeating the "Western" in East Prussia. To its right, the Northern Front was to go on the offensive in order to defeat the troops that were unsuccessfully advancing on Leningrad. On the left, the Western Front, providing the operation of the North-Western Front with an offensive against Warsaw, was supposed to reach the river. Wisla.

G.K. Zhukov, assessing the situation, decided, firmly relying on the fortified areas and borders of East Prussia and preventing the enemy from invading the territory of the "western", continue to concentrate suitable reserves and at the same time deliver short blows in order to exhaust the enemy, and then go into general offensive and reach the Minsk-Dvinsk-Riga line. D. G. Pavlov, considering that the front of the "Eastern" had acquired a general superiority over the "Western", decided to defeat them before the approach of the enemy's reserves. At first, the strikes of the "Eastern"

were successful, but then the situation changed. Having pulled up the reserves, Zhukov formed a large grouping of troops and broke through the front of the "Eastern" with a powerful blow. At the same time, their forces, which crossed the Western Bug, were defeated by a counterattack, and then another large enemy grouping was surrounded and destroyed. About 20 more rifle divisions and up to four armored brigades of the "Eastern" by the time the first game ended, were under the threat of complete encirclement and defeat. During the second game, the role of G.K.

Zhukov changed - now he commanded the Southwestern Front of the "Eastern". Under the terms of the second game, two fronts were now operating on the side of the "Western" - the Southern and the South-Eastern. The troops of the Southern Front were led by Colonel-General F. I. Kuznetsov (commander of the troops of the Baltic Special Military District), the South-Eastern by D. G. Pavlov. According to the legend of the game, the "Western" in alliance with the "South-Western" and "South" began a war against the "Eastern", going on the offensive on the two fronts mentioned.

And again, Zhukov demonstrated remarkable operational talent, striving, first of all, to beat the enemy in parts, preventing his strike groups from joining. Skillfully concentrating his own forces, striking at the junctions of opposing formations, using false maneuvers, he eventually divided the armies of the "Western" into separate operational groups and prepared an impressive blow of strategic importance.

The games brought undoubted benefits to its participants. Military historian P. N. Bobylev, who studied in detail the course of these exercises on maps, noted that "the highest command staff of the Red Army received good practice in assessing the situation and making decisions in difficult conditions, in planning and logistical support for front-line and army operations, in driving large mobile formations in cooperation with aviation". But the beginning of the Great Patriotic War showed that in January 1941 the operational-strategic link of the command staff of the Red Army played on the cards such a variant of military operations that was not planned by the real "Western", that is, Germany. Most of the participants in the games led formations in them, regardless of what positions they actually held at the beginning of 1941.

The analysis of the games was carried out by I. V. Stalin, who was clearly dissatisfied with the actions of the "Eastern", as well as the final report of the Chief of the General Staff, General of the Army K. A. Meretskov. As a result, Meretskov was relieved of his post, and General of the Army G.K. Zhukov was appointed Chief of the General Staff. He took up his new duties on February

1, 1941. That month, the General Staff completed the development of the latest version of the mobilization plan, which received the name MP-41. According to it, it was planned to deploy the Armed Forces of the USSR in the amount of 344 calculated divisions, of which 198 rifle, mountain rifle and motorized rifle divisions, 31 motorized, 61 tank, and 13 cavalry divisions[83] . The implementation of the mobilization plan required to call up about 5 million people from the reserve, including up to 600 thousand officers and 885 thousand people from the reserve. In addition to the younger one, it was planned to transfer to the Armed Forces from the people's

economy 248 thousand cars, about 36 thousand tractors and 730 thousand horses. It was planned to provide the troops with weapons and military equipment at the expense of military stocks stored in the warehouses of the military districts and the center, as well as at the expense of receipts from industry in 1941-1942. In the mobilization plan, during the rise according to the "West" option, the number of western military districts was determined at 6.5 million people, with a total number of troops (excluding formations of civilian people's commissariats) of 7.85 million people (in reality, by the beginning of the war, the number of western districts was only 2902 thousand

people). person)[85] . After the approval of the mobilization plan, General of the Army Zhukov sent directives to the districts in March explaining the procedure for its development and provision. He set the deadline for working out plans on the ground until May 1, and then postponed it to July 20. Unfortunately, before the start of the war, the districts and troops were not able to

work out in detail the entire complex of tasks facing them. At the end of February, People's Commissar of Defense Marshal Timoshenko and Chief of the General Staff General of the Army Zhukov held a meeting of the General Staff on the condition of railways, highways and dirt roads. The conclusions were basically the following: the highway network in the western regions of Belarus and Ukraine is in poor condition. Many bridges cannot support the weight of medium tanks and artillery, and country roads require major repairs. The People's Commissar of Defense noted that in 1940, on the instructions of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, the People's Commissariat of Railways developed a 7-year plan for the technical reconstruction of Western railways. However, nothing serious has been done so far, except for changing the gauge

and elementary work to adapt railway structures for loading and unloading troops and weapons. By March 11, an updated plan for the strategic deployment of the USSR Armed Forces in the West and East was prepared [86] . According to the General Staff, Germany had deployed 225 infantry, 20 tank and 15 motorized divisions, 20 thousand field guns, 10 thousand tanks and up to 15 thousand aircraft. Of this number, 76 divisions were concentrated near the borders of the USSR, including 6 tank and 7 motorized divisions, and about 35 divisions in Romania and Bu

will send up to 200 divisions against the Soviet Union, of which up to 165 infantry, 20 tank and 15 motorized. In total, taking into account the troops of Finland, Romania and Hungary, 268 divisions, 20,050 guns, 10,810 tanks and 11,600 aircraft could be deployed on the western borders. In the East, Japan, together with Manchukuo, can deploy up to 60 infantry divisions, 1 cavalry division, 27 mixed and 6 cavalry brigades, 1,200 tanks and tankettes, 850 heavy guns, 3,000 aircraft.

But, again, as before in the strategic [87] deployment plan of September 18, 1940, it was noted that the General Staff did not have documentary data on the operational plans of potential adversaries. Therefore, largely well-established assumptions were made: "Germany will most likely deploy its main forces in the southeast from Sedlec to Hungary in order to seize Ukraine with a blow to Berdichev, Kiev. This attack, apparently, will be accompanied by an auxiliary attack in the north from East Prussia to Dvinsk and Riga, or concentric attacks from Suwalki and Brest to Volkovysk-Baranovichi. The possibility of Finland's action in the northwest and the Romanian army in the south was not ruled out. It was expected that Germany would deploy: north of the lower reaches of the river. Western Bug to the Baltic Sea - 30-40 infantry, 3-5 tank, 2-4 motorized divisions, up to 3570 guns and up to 2000 tanks; south of the river Western Bug to the border with Hungary - up to 110 infantry, 14 tank, 10 motorized divisions, up to 11.5 thousand guns, 7.5 thousand tanks and most of their aviation. At the same time, the possibility of concentrating the main forces of the German army in East Prussia and in the direction of Warsaw was admitted in order to deliver and deploy the main blow through Lithuania in the direction of Riga or Kovno, Dvinsk. In addition, auxiliary concentric strikes were expected from Lomzha and Brest, with their subsequent development in the direction of Baranovichi - Minsk.

The strategic deployment of the Armed Forces was proposed to be carried out taking into account the likelihood of military operations on two fronts. The main forces were planned to be deployed in the West and the Finnish front: 171 rifle, 27 motorized rifle, 54 tank and 7 cavalry divisions, 2 separate rifle brigades, 253 aviation regiments. It was noted that "deployment of the main forces

The Red Army in the West with the grouping of the main forces against East Prussia and in the direction of Warsaw raises serious concerns that the struggle on this front could lead to protracted battles. From March 12 to

March 20, the General Staff conducted a field trip of the headquarters of the Leningrad, Ural and Oryol military districts in order to check the preparation of the front and army directorates in organizing and conducting an offensive operation in winter on difficult terrain and waging a fight against an enemy who had gone over to the counteroffensive. The topic was not accidental - the echoes of the war with Finland continued to affect.

What did the field trip show? There were significant shortcomings in the preparation of the senior command staff: an insufficiently deep assessment of the situation and, as a result, the adoption of an unreasonable and incorrect decision; inability to correctly formulate the concept of an operation and determine the place and role of one's army (corps) in it; inability to take into account the influence of the terrain on the course of the operation; the front-line operation at the first stage was considered as a private operation of one army; the direction of the main attack did not have a clearly defined grouping of troops and decisive superiority was not created in this direction; mechanized formations were used not in the main direction to solve operational problems, but in close connection with the infantry; aviation tasks were set without taking into account its capabilities; the airborne brigade was used in isolation without interaction with mechanized formations , [etc.](#) [\[88\]](#) In short, the field trip, as the commander of the Kiev Special Military District, Colonel-General M.P. Kirponos noted in his directive No. A / 0061 of April 18, revealed "low operational and staff training of the front and army departments."

And, it wasn't random. By the time under review, the development of the main provisions of the military strategy was not at the proper level. We have already noted that the theory of the deep operation was developed in the Red Army. However, in the second half of the 1930s, when mass repressions began in the army and navy, they tried to forget about it at the initiative of the then people's commissar for defense, Marshal of the Soviet Union K. E. Voroshilov. And, only in December 1940, they again remembered a deep offensive operation. But

time for its development was lost. The theory of strategic defense and front-line defensive operations, as before, was limited to those provisions that were related to the actions of the covering forces at the beginning of the war. It was assumed that during its course the troops would not need to resort to long-term defense, and even more so on a large scale, which had a negative impact on the conduct of operational and strategic defense at the initial stage of the Great Patriotic War. On the instructions of G. K. Zhukov, in

accordance with the revised plan for strategic deployment, the chief of the Operations Directorate of the General Staff, General A. M. Vasilevsky, prepared on April 10 a directive on the operational deployment of troops in the border military districts. In particular, for the Western Special Military District it was indicated: "The main tasks are: with the transition to the offensive of the South-Western Front (South-Western Front. - **Auth.**) - a blow from the left wing of the Western Front in the general direction to Sedlec - Radom, attack from the South-Western Front, defeat the Lublin-Radom enemy grouping. The immediate task is to capture Sedlec, Lukov and capture the crossings across the river. Wisla. Develop a plan for the first operation of the 13th and 4th armies and a plan for the defense of the 3rd and 10th armies. Thus, as before, they proceeded from the established strategic axiom: a) the main threat is in the southwestern direction; b) deliver a counterattack, immediately go over to the counteroffensive and smash the enemy groupings.

In March, the General Staff completed the development of a mobilization plan for the industry for the production of military products in case of war. G.K. Zhukov, together with his deputy General V.D. Sokolovsky, introduced him to the Chairman of the Defense Committee under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR K.E. Voroshilov. Time passed, but no decisions were made, and then Zhukov was forced to report personally to Stalin about the absence of an industrial mobilization plan. The draft plan was instructed to consider N. A. Voznesensky, a group of leaders of the people's commissariats and the State Planning Commission, but time still turned out to be lost.

During the spring, Army General Zhukov organized work to increase the emergency supplies of all the western border districts at the expense of state reserves for fuel, food and clothing. People's Commissar of Defense and

The General Staff considered it necessary in the conditions of the impending war to bring the material and technical means closer to the troops. The decision is correct. But no one expected what the initial period of the war would turn out to be. After a quick breakthrough of the front, the enemy managed to capture significant material and technical reserves.

At the same time, work was underway on the construction of field airfields and concrete runways at permanent airfields. However, due to the lack of forces and means, it was not possible to complete what was planned for the start of the war. As a result, aviation in some areas was based close to the border. A lot of problems arose with the construction of fortified areas on the new border moved to the west,

using the old fortified areas. On April 8, the General Staff sent an order to the commanders of the Western and Kiev Special Military Districts, in which they obliged them to carry out a number of measures to create new and use old fortified areas, including the formation of personnel for the departments of fortified areas. A few days later, another directive was sent to the border districts, ordering "to urgently mount all the weapons available in the district for fortified areas into military installations and put them on alert", and in the absence of special weapons "to install temporarily (with a simple seal) in embrasure openings and boxes, machine guns on field benches and, where possible, guns"[90] . In the second half of April, in order to strengthen the composition of the western border military districts, the formation of 10 artillery anti-tank brigades of the RGK and 4 airborne corps began. On April 26, the military councils of the Trans-Baikal and Far Eastern military districts were instructed to prepare one mechanized, two rifle corps, and two airborne divisions for dispatch to the west. At the same time, General Staff—

Directive No. org/3/522698 sets the task of transferring the air force rear services to a new system by July 1, 1941 and organizing new air base areas[91] . On May 5, a solemn meeting was held in the Grand Kremlin Palace dedicated to the graduation of commanders who graduated from military

academies and military faculties of civilian universities. Stalin addressed the participants. Congratulating the graduates on their graduation, he noted that over the past three to four years a new army has been created, armed with modern military equipment. At a banquet arranged after the reception of graduates, Stalin, in response to a toast of one of those present for the peaceful Stalinist foreign policy, made an amendment: "Peaceful policy ensured peace in our country. Peace politics is a good thing. For the time being, we carried out a line on the defensive - until we rearmed our army, did not supply the army with modern means of struggle. And now that we have reconstructed our army, saturated it with equipment for modern combat, when we have become strong, now we must move from defense to offensive. In defending our country, we must act offensively. From defense to move on to a military policy of offensive operations. We need to reorganize our education, our propaganda, agitation, our press in an offensive spirit. The Red Army is a modern army, and a modern army is an offensive army. But what kind of offensive could we talk about, even if they didn't really have time to prepare for the defense? On the day when Stalin spoke at a reception in honor of graduates of military academies, the head of the Main

Intelligence Directorate, General Golikov, signed a new intelligence report. It made the following conclusions:

"1. In two months, the number of German divisions in the border zone against the USSR increased by 37 divisions (from 70 to 107). Of these, the number of tank divisions increased from 6 to 12 divisions. With the Romanian and Hungarian armies, this will amount to about 130 divisions.

2. It is necessary to reckon with the further strengthening of the German concentration against the USSR at the expense of the liberated troops in Yugoslavia with their grouping in the area of the Protectorate and on the territory of

Romania. 3. A further strengthening of German troops on the territory of Norway is likely, the North Norwegian grouping of which in the future can be used against the USSR through Finland and by sea.

4. The available forces of German troops for operations in the Middle East by this time are expressed in 40 divisions, of which 25

in Greece and 15 in Bulgaria. For the same purposes, up to two parachute divisions are concentrated with their probable use in Iraq"[93] .

On May 6, the People's Commissar of the Navy, Admiral N. G. Kuznetsov, reported to I. V. Stalin that the naval attaché in Berlin, Captain 1st Rank

Vorontsov, reported: According to one German officer from Hitler's headquarters, the Germans are preparing an invasion of the USSR through Finland, the Baltic states and Romania by May 14. At the same time, powerful air raids on Moscow and Leningrad and parachute landings in frontier centers are planned. An attempt to find out the original source of information and expand this information has not yet yielded results, since Bozer evaded this. Work with him and verification of information continues. I believe that the information is false and is specially directed along this channel

so that it reaches our Government and checks how the USSR will react to it" [94]

On May 8, TASS denied rumors about the concentration of Soviet troops on the western borders. The next day, the USSR severed diplomatic relations with the emigrant governments of Belgium, Norway and Yugoslavia, and on May 12 recognized the pro-German regime in Iraq. TASS did

its job, and the General Staff did its own, although not in full. On May 13, the internal military districts received a directive from the General Staff to start moving troops to the west. From the Urals, the 22nd Army went to the Velikiye Luki region; from the Volga Military District to the Gomel region - the 21st Army; from the North Caucasian Military District to the area of Belaya Tserkov - the 19th Army; from the Kharkov Military District to the line of the Western Dvina - the 25th Rifle Corps; from Transbaikalia to Ukraine to the Shepetovka region - the 16th Army. In total, in May, 28 rifle divisions and four army departments were transferred from the internal military districts closer to the western borders. However, the divisions consisted of 8-9 thousand people each and did not have the military equipment fully provided for by the state.

On May 14, People's Commissar of Defense Marshal Timoshenko ordered the early graduation of cadets from military schools and immediately send them to the troops. Troop Commander

directives were sent to the border military districts, which required "to cover the mobilization, concentration and deployment of troops" to develop detailed plans for the defense of the state border, anti-landing and air defense [95] . The Western Special Military District was to develop these plans by May 20, the Leningrad and Kiev Special by May 25, and the Baltic Special by May 30. The following tasks were set as defense tasks: to prevent the invasion of the ground and air enemy, the landing of his air and sea assault forces; cover the mobilization, concentration and deployment of their troops. No offensive tasks were assigned to the troops of the western border military districts. Instead, defense was provided for the entire operational depth, and on a strategic scale - up to the distant approaches to Moscow. The directives contained instructions for the evacuation, mining and undermining of some important objects. At the same time, Army And General Zhukov considered it necessary to have a plan that provided for a preemptive strike against a possible enemy. General Vasilevsky was instructed to develop a draft "Considerations on the plan for the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union in the event of a war with Germany and its allies." Such a document was prepared by May 15[96] . It was written by hand, addressed to the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, and was not signed by either People's Commissar of Defense Marshal Timoshenko or

Chief of the General Staff General of the Army Zhukov. The document stated: "Considering that Germany currently keeps her army mobilized, with deployed rears, she has the opportunity to warn us in the deployment and launch a surprise strike. In order to prevent this, I consider it necessary in no case to give the German command the initiative to act, to preempt the enemy in deployment and attack the German army at a time when it will be in the deployment stage and will not have time to organize the front and the interaction of the military branches. A. M. Vasilevsky, a man ~~with~~ the gift of strategic foresight, was able to correctly determine the intention of the enemy. By

in his opinion, the first strategic goal of the actions of the Red Army should be the defeat of the main forces of the Wehrmacht deployed south of the Brest-Demblin line, and the exit by the 30th day of the operation north of the line of Ostrolenka, r. Narew, Lovich, Lodz, Kreutzburg, Opeln, Olomouc. As a subsequent strategic goal, it was planned to go on the offensive from the Katowice region in a northern or northwestern direction, defeat large enemy forces in the center and on the northern wing of the German front and seize the territory of former Poland and East Prussia.

Based on this, the immediate task was determined - the defeat of the German army east of the river. Vistula and exit in the direction of Krakow to the border of the rivers Narew, Vistula and mastery of the Katowice region. To solve this problem, it was planned to inflict: the main blow by the forces of the Southwestern Front in the direction of Krakow, Katowice and cut off Germany from her southern allies; an auxiliary strike by the left wing of the Western Front in the direction of Warsaw, Deblin with the aim of encircling the Warsaw grouping and capturing Warsaw, as well as assisting the Southwestern Front in defeating the Lublin grouping. In addition, it was planned to conduct an active defense against Finland, East Prussia, Hungary, Romania and be ready to strike against Romania if the situation was favorable. The transition to the offensive

from the Chishev-Lyudovleno line was planned to be carried out with the forces of 152 divisions against 100 German ones. In other sections of the state border, it was planned to conduct active defense. In the document developed by General

Vasilevsky, the tasks of the fronts were outlined. The Northern Front (Leningrad Military

District) was to defend Leningrad, the port of Murmansk, the Kirov railway, and, together with the Baltic Fleet, ensure complete dominance in the waters of the Gulf of Finland. The task for the North-Western Front was defined on a scheme that we do not have. The Western Front was supposed to defend itself, and with the transition of the South-Western Front to the offensive, strike with the left wing in the direction of Warsaw and Sedlec-Radom, defeat the Warsaw grouping and capture Warsaw in cooperation with the South-Western Front. In addition, Western

the front was supposed to defeat the Lublin-Radom grouping of the enemy, go to the river. Vistula and moving parts to capture Radom.

Responsible tasks were assigned to the Southwestern Front. Firstly, with a concentric strike by the armies of the right wing, encircle and destroy the main enemy grouping east of the river. Vistula near Lublin. Secondly, simultaneously with a strike from the Senova, Przemysl, Lyubavnech line, defeat the enemy in the Krakow and Sandomierz-Kielce direction, seize the area of Krakow, Katowice, Kielce, meaning in the future to advance from this area in a northern or northwestern direction to defeat large forces of the northern wing of the enemy front and the capture of the territory of former Poland and East Prussia. Thirdly, to firmly defend the state border with Hungary and Romania and be ready to deliver powerful blows against Romania from the region of Chernivtsi and Chisinau with the immediate goal of defeating the northern wing of the Romanian army and reaching the line of the river. Moldova, Iasi.

Stalin not only rejected the proposal for a preemptive strike, but also responded with a categorical refusal to the requests of Timoshenko and Zhukov to be allowed to put the troops of the border districts on alert, accusing them of trying to provoke Germany to attack, to give Hitler a pretext for aggression. On May 16, Iosif Vissarionovich ordered his secretary A.N. Poskrebyshev to call Zhukov. "Stalin was very angry with my report and instructed me to convey," recalled Georgy Konstantinovich, "that I would no longer write such notes "for the prosecutor": that the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars was more aware of the prospects for our relations with Germany than the chief of the General Staff, that the Soviet Union still has enough time to prepare for the decisive battle with fascism. And the implementation of my proposals would only play into the hands of the enemies of Soviet power . At the same time, Stalin —

was concerned about the state of the country's defenses. He did not want to repeat the bitter lessons of the Soviet-Finnish war. Therefore, at the end of May, he convened an extended meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, at which the Chief of the General Staff made a report on the state of the country's defense preparations. His speech gives a complete picture

the state of affairs in the Armed Forces a little over three weeks before the start of the Great Patriotic War[98] . First of all, General

of the Army G.K. Zhukov stressed the urgency of conducting a general mobilization in the country, justifying this with alarming figures: out of 170 divisions and 2 brigades in the border military districts, 19 divisions have a strength of 5-6 thousand people (wartime staff - 14, 5 thousand), 7 cavalry divisions - an average of 6 thousand, 144 divisions have 8-9 thousand people each. In the interior districts, most divisions are kept on reduced staffs, while many rifle divisions have only just begun to form. The armament of troops with KV and T-34 tanks is proceeding at an extremely slow pace - they began to arrive only from the second half of 1940, mainly to armored schools and troops of border districts. At the same time, some tank factories do not carry out

plans.

Perfectly understanding what forces in a modern war play the main strike role, the Chief of the General Staff drew attention to the problem of mechanized formations: out of the 20 planned for formation, only 9 corps have been created so far. To fully equip the new mechanized corps, 16,600 tanks of only new types are required, and in total - about 32,000 tanks. However, I had to state: there is simply nowhere to get such a number of cars in one year. The training of personnel for mechanized formations also lags significantly behind.

The state of artillery also did not cause optimism. Only the military artillery of the border military districts was completed up to standard norms. At the same time, 27 artillery regiments and 10 artillery anti-tank brigades of the RGK were being formed. However, the Main Artillery Directorate underestimated such a powerful rocket weapon as the BM-13 (Katyusha). The production of 82-mm and 120-mm mortars needs to be significantly accelerated. The report emphasized that the most acute issue is the provision of military units with artillery shells and mines, primarily for the latest artillery systems.

There was a huge shortage of modern means in the troops, in fact, mobilization
communications, absent

And

untouchable stocks of communication property. For example, the troops of the Western Special Military District were provided with radio stations only by 27%, the Kyiv Special - by 30, and the Baltic Special - by 52%. The most

important problem is the construction of fortified lines along the state border, the condition of highways and dirt roads, and railway lines. By the end of May 1941, 2,500 reinforced concrete structures were built on the western border, of which 1,000 were armed with UR artillery, and the remaining 1,500 were armed only with machine guns. However, the construction of fortified areas has not been completed, leaving the border in a very vulnerable position.

The combat readiness of the Air Force was of particular concern. From January 1, 1939 to the end of May 1941, the aviation industry produced 17,745 combat aircraft, of which only 3,719 were new types. However, approximately 75-80% of the total number of aircraft in terms of their flight performance is inferior to the same type of German aircraft. Only about 21% of aviation units are equipped with new aircraft. At the same time, the formation of 25 new aviation divisions, as well as 5 airborne corps, for which there is not enough military equipment, has begun. The Chief of the General Staff noted that the Air Force was in the process of reorganization, transition to a new materiel and retraining of the flight crew. And only in a year and a half they can appear in a completely renewed, powerful, combat form. Noting the insufficient equipment of the air defense forces,

General of the Army Zhukov described the state of the Navy. By the end of May 1941, it included more than 600 warships, including 3 battleships, 7 cruisers, 49 destroyers, 218 submarines, and 2529 aircraft. The personnel are well trained, the commanders of the fleets, flotillas and their headquarters are ready for combat operations. At the same time, little attention was paid to coastal and air defense, mine and torpedo weapons.

The Chief of the General Staff cited some more data characterizing the combat readiness of the Armed Forces. As of January 1, 1941, there were more than 4.2 million people in the ground forces, air force, navy, and air defense forces. For the training of qualified command and political personnel,

19 academies, 10 faculties at civilian universities, 7 higher naval and 203 military schools. Despite this, the issue of command personnel continued to be acute, since the mass promotion of young commanders to senior command positions led to a decrease in the combat effectiveness of the army for some time. There is a shortage of qualified command personnel, tank specialists, artillerymen and flight technical personnel in the troops. As a positive moment, it was noted that "strategic fuels and lubricants, food, uniforms have been created, which, in case of war, will be enough for

reserves

some years".

In conclusion, the Chief of the General Staff emphasized that "the current period in the development of our armed forces is a period of fundamental military reforms, the search for new ways to most effectively use military equipment, improve the entire system of combat training of troops, and develop Soviet military doctrine." Students of military academies are taught that wars are not declared in the present era, that the aggressor seeks to have on his side all the advantages of a surprise attack, so each military unit must be ready at any moment to repel an attack. "Military strategy is built mainly on the correct assertion that only offensive actions can defeat an aggressor," said Zhukov. "Unfortunately, other options for fighting — oncoming battles, forced retreats, fighting in an environment (if, of course, we take not individual works, but the direction in teaching military disciplines) — are not considered thoroughly enough." In this Zhukov was right. The war showed that insufficient attention to these types of hostilities was one of the reasons for the defeats in the initial period and the heavy losses of the Red Army troops. After Zhukov finished his speech, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Molotov asked why the General Staff put up with such big shortcomings in preparation for the country's defense for a long time? Stalin answered this. He said that Zhukov had been the head of the General Staff for only a few months, and therefore could not be responsible for the legacy left to him.

It should be noted here that the role of the General Staff was underestimated by the political and state leadership of the USSR, and frequent changes in its organization affected the preparation of the country and its Armed Forces to repel aggression. In addition, the frequent change of chiefs of the General Staff did not contribute to its systematic and efficient work. In contrast to the practice of the general staffs of foreign states, where staying in such a responsible post for up to ten years was considered quite normal, expedient and even necessary, in the Soviet Union they did not attach importance to this. From May 1937 to August 1940 (more than three years), the General Staff was headed by B. M. Shaposhnikov. He was replaced in this post by K. A. Meretskov, but five months later G. K. Zhukov was appointed to the post of Chief of the General Staff. The change of chiefs of the General Staff, as a rule, was accompanied by unjustified movements of the heads of departments, departments and their deputies. For example, from the autumn of 1940 until the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, four chiefs of the leader, the Operational

Directorate of the General Staff, were replaced. Stalin, summing up the meeting, practically supported all the fundamental conclusions of the chief of the General Staff[99]. He noted that part of the command cadres were young people who had recently been promoted to command positions and did not have sufficient military experience. Stalin agreed with Zhukov's opinion that it was impossible to completely disarm the fortified areas on the old border, but it was necessary to keep not only machine guns, but also part of the artillery weapons in the areas being disarmed. Those responsible for aviation were tasked with speeding up the flow of new equipment into the aviation units. For the air defense forces, the primary task was to organize a reliable cover for industrial centers in order to prevent the enemy from destroying the economic potential of the Soviet Union in case of war. The People's Commissar of the Navy was instructed to quickly strengthen coastal and air defense, eliminate shortcomings in mine and torpedo armament. V. A. Malyshev, People's Commissar for Medium Machine Building, was instructed to pay special attention to creating conditions for the faster development of industry in the Urals and the East, to establish the uninter

Amur, non-ferrous metallurgy enterprises in Central Asia. Particular attention should be paid in the new industrial areas created to the operation of hydroelectric power plants, car assembly plants, pipe-rolling enterprises and aluminum plants. Stalin emphasized that it was necessary to think over and work out priority specific proposals for eliminating shortcomings in the country's preparation for defense and submit them to the government for a decision. At the same time, it was necessary to proceed from real possibilities.

So, less than a month before the attack of Nazi Germany on the Soviet Union, its armed forces were in the stage of "fundamental military reforms", the search for new ways to use military equipment, technical re-equipment and improvement of the organizational and staff structure. The top military leadership has not yet mastered, as the experience of strategic military games has shown, the methods of conducting a strategic offensive and defense, an oncoming battle, retreat, and combat operations in encirclement. This all explains, along with Stalin's underestimation of the possibility of Hitler unleashing a war against the USSR in the near future, the reasons for the defeat of the Red Army in the initial period of the war.

What are the measures to prepare the country to reflect a possible

aggression were adopted after the meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks?

At the end of May, the General Staff instructed the commanders of the military districts to urgently begin preparing command posts. In late May - early June, in accordance with the MP-41 plan, 793,500 conscripts were called up to equip 21 divisions of border districts, artillery, air defense units and fortified areas[100]. On June 4, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks decided to increase the strength of the Red Army in peacetime by 120,695 people and in wartime by 239,566 people.

These were all timid steps, caused by the fear of "provoking" Hitler, who had long been ready to attack the Soviet Union. Stalin still resolutely suppressed all local initiatives. So, in early June, the military council of the Kiev Special Military District, at the suggestion of Colonel-General M.P. Kirponos, made the right decision to withdraw part of the forces of the permanent garrisons of fortified areas into the

the readiness of the wood-and-earth firing points built there. The head of the border troops of the NKVD of Ukraine T. A. Strokach reported this order to the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs L. P. Beria, who immediately passed the information received to Stalin. As a result, Zhukov and Timoshenko were inflicted with a real dressing down and it was forbidden to make any advances of troops to the front lines without Stalin's personal instructions. The Chief of the General Staff is forced to telegraph Kirponos: "Report to the People's Commissar of Defense for a report on the basis on which parts of the fortified areas of the KOVO were ordered to occupy the foreground. Such actions can immediately provoke the Germans into an armed clash and are fraught with all sorts of consequences. Cancel such an order immediately and inform who specifically gave such an unauthorized order. The next day, Zhukov ordered all the commanders of the western border military districts "not to occupy the forefield without a special order from the field and UR units, but to organize the protection of the foreground structures by sentries and patrols"[101] .

The commanders of the troops of the border military districts M. P. Kirponos, D. G. Pavlov and F. I. Kuznetsov were summoned to Moscow at the direction of Stalin, where they received the strictest instructions from Timoshenko and Zhukov on vigilance and the prevention of reasons for provoking the Germans into an armed clash with Soviet troops.

Despite the suggestion made by the commander of the border military districts, they continued to carry out strategic deployment activities at their own peril and risk. True, these were still timid steps. For example, on June 10, the commander of the Baltic Special Military District ordered that the theater of operations be put on alert and that points for organizing field depots, anti-tank mines, explosives, and anti-personnel barriers be determined on the site of each army. At the same time, it was ordered to prepare improvised materials for the construction of crossings over the rivers Viliya, Nevyazha, Dubyssa, to prepare pontoon shelves for building bridges across the Neman, and also to carry out reconnaissance of the most important bridges with a view to their subsequent destruction. In addition, it was necessary to bring all air defense, all means of communication to full combat readiness, prepare for work

in a combat situation, railway communication [102]. Along with this, the military councils of the armies and the commanders of the mechanized corps were ordered to start moving troops into the strips and areas designated for them according to the cover plan, taking with them "only

what is necessary for life and combat." By no means did Stalin react skeptically to all intelligence reports. Thus, the information received from Berlin on June 12 alarmed him so much that the Chief of the General Staff was able to send a directive on the same day to the commanders of the troops of the border military districts with instructions to withdraw divisions located in depth, closer to the state border, from June 12 to 15. The commander of the Kyiv Special Military District, General Kirponos, ordered the rifle divisions located in the depths to begin advancing at 20:00 on June 18 in full strength, but without mobilization reserves. In the Western Special Military District, the commanders of rifle corps and divisions received verbal orders

to advance from the depths closer to the border. On June 13, Zhukov and Timoshenko asked Stalin for permission to bring the troops of the border military districts to full combat readiness and deploy the first echelons according to the cover plan. The implementation of this decision made it possible, to a certain extent, to give the troops a chance to meet the

enemy, as they say, fully armed. But Stalin promised to think. Why did Stalin not believe in the possibility of a German attack? First, foreign and military intelligence, judging by published information, reported several different dates for the attack, which (except for June 22) did not come true. Secondly, the disinformation campaign of the Soviet leadership played its role. Rumors were spreading in Germany: Stalin would come to Berlin, they were already sewing red flags for the meeting, an imminent invasion of England was coming. On June 13, the Völkischer Beobachter newspaper published an article by the Imperial Propaganda Minister J. Goebbels entitled "Crete as an example", which was supposed to give the impression that the landing of German paratroopers on Crete was a rehearsal for an attack on Great Britain. The newspaper was immediately confiscated. Goebbels noted in his diary on June 14: "English ra

which hides our preparations for the invasion (on the British Isles. - **Auth.**). That was the main goal. The world news is in complete disarray . "[103]

On the day when Goebbels rejoiced that the disinformation of the Soviet leadership played a role, a TASS report was published in Pravda. It declared that all rumors about Germany's intention to break the non-aggression pact and attack the Soviet Union were groundless. Unfortunately, it only disorientated the commanders of the Red Army and dulled their vigilance. All these miscalculations in assessing the international situation and flirting with Nazi Germany turned fatally against the Soviet Union. There was no time to prepare to repel a possible aggression. The subsequent steps taken by the top military leadership of

the Red Army could not prevent the catastrophe looming over the border military districts. So, from mid-June, ammunition was issued in some formations, vacations for personnel were canceled, and the construction of command posts began. The troops were working out the "Plan-instruction for raising troops on combat alert." On June 14, the commander of the Odessa military district, Colonel General **Ya . T.** Cherevichenko, received an order to separate the command of the 9th Army, headed by

the commander of the district, with its withdrawal to Tiraspol. On June 15, the commander of the Baltic Special Military District, Colonel-General F.I. Kuznetsov, demanded that the combat readiness of the units be maximized and the aviation dispersed. According to this order, the commanders of the rifle divisions were to develop plans for the defense of their zone, and the preparation of anti-tank mines and wire obstacles in front of the front line was to be carried out in such a way that a minefield, by special order, if necessary, could be established within 3 hours. At the same time, it was ordered to carefully work out an air defense plan, to disguise aircraft, tanks and artillery. All these activities were to be completed by 25

June.

On June 17, People's Commissar for State Security of the USSR V.N. Merkulov sent a message to the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, in which,

referring to a source working at the headquarters of the German aviation, noted:

"1. All German military measures to prepare for an armed uprising against the USSR have been completely completed, and a strike can be expected at any time.

2. In the circles of the aviation headquarters, a TASS message. taken very ironically. Emphasize that this statement is of no value cannot have."

The report said that the objects of German air raids would primarily be the Svir-3 power plant, Moscow factories producing individual parts for aircraft (electrical equipment, ball bearings, tires), as well as car repair shops. Hungary can take an active part in hostilities on the side of Germany. On the accompanying note to the message, Stalin made a resolution: "T-shchu Merkulov. You can send your "source"

from the headquarters of Germ. aviation to e. mother. This is not a "source", but a disinformant. I. St."[104] . Meanwhile, the Main Intelligence Directorate continued to receive information one more disturbing than the other. On—

June 19, the Soviet resident in Rome, G. I. Rogatnev, received a message from a most valuable agent: "Germany will attack the USSR between June 20 and 25." At the same time, the Breitenbach agent at an extraordinary meeting with an employee of the Berlin residency B. N. Zhuravlev said:

"Germany will attack the USSR on June 22 after 3 o'clock in the — IN morning"[105] . On the same day, June 19, General of the Army Zhukov sent telegrams to the commanders of the troops of the border military districts, instructing the People's Commissar of Defense to withdraw the front and army departments to field posts. The commander of the Kiev Special Military District was instructed to withdraw the headquarters of the front (South Western. - **Auth.**) to Ternopil by June 22, observing the strictest secrecy. The Front Directorate of the North-Western Front, headed by the commander of the Baltic Special Military District, was supposed to arrive in Panevezys on June 22–23, and the Western Front in Obuz Lesna. At the same time, the chief of the General Staff set the task of working out the issues of interaction with the fleet within two weeks in accordance with the cover plan.

In order to mask the airfields, Marshal Timoshenko on June 19 demanded by July 1 "to sow all airfields with grasses to match the color of the surrounding area, paint the runways and imitate the entire airfield situation in accordance with the surrounding background." The linear, crowded arrangement of aircraft was strictly forbidden, it was ordered to ensure their dispersal, to camouflage warehouses, workshops and parks by July 1, to organize by July 5 in each aviation-based area 8-10 false airfields with mock-ups of aircraft. By July 15, it was ordered to complete all work on the camouflage of artillery and mechanized units [106]. The fleets and flotillas received an order to switch to operational readiness No. 2. The terms determined

by the People's Commissar of Defense show that he did not have information from the Soviet residency about a possible attack on the Soviet Union in the period from June 20 to June 25. Otherwise, it would be unreasonable to set such terms. Who will sow airfields with grass and paint runways when the enemy has already gone over to

the offensive? After Stalin found out about the events in the Baltic Special Military District, he again gave another scolding to Timoshenko and Zhukov. As a result, on June 20, the chief of the General Staff sent a telegram to the district commander, Colonel-General Kuznetsov, demanding that the order to put the air defense system on alert be canceled, as it causes various rumors and unnerves the public. On the same day, the administration of the 9th Army of the Odessa Military District was alerted and, under the guise of command and staff exercises, by the end of the day deployed a command post in an area pre-equipped in case of war, establishing contact with the formations included in the

army[107]. The faster the time set by Hitler for the start of Operation Barbarossa approached, the more alarming became the reports that came to the General Staff from the border military districts. At 10 pm on June 21, the chief of staff of the Baltic Special Military District, General P. S. Klenov, reported to the General Staff that the Germans had completed the construction of bridges across the Neman, and the civilian population was ordered to eva

rumors that the troops were ordered to take their starting position The
the Offensive ^[108]. Chief of Staff of the Western Special Military for
District, General V.G. , motor noise is heard. The chief of staff of the
Kyiv Special Military District, General M.A. Purkaev, reported a defector
who said that the German "troops were leaving for the starting areas for
an offensive that would begin on the morning of June 22."

In connection with these disturbing reports, the People's Commissar
for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, V. M. Molotov, immediately invited the
German ambassador F. Schulenburg and told him that Germany,
without any reason, was deteriorating relations with the USSR every
day. Despite repeated protests from the Soviet side, German planes
continue to intrude into its airspace. There are persistent rumors about
the upcoming war between the Soviet Union and Germany. The Soviet
government has every reason to believe this, because the German
leadership did not react in any way to the TASS report of June 14.
Schulenburg promised to immediately report the complaints he had
heard to his government. However, this was just a simple diplomatic
excuse on his part, because the German ambassador was well aware
that the Wehrmacht troops were on full alert and were just waiting for a
signal to move east. While Molotov was making claims to Schulenburg,
Army General

Zhukov, having received reports from the chiefs of staff of the
border military districts, immediately reported this to the people's
commissar for defense, Marshal Timoshenko and Stalin, who summoned
both to him. They arrived in the Kremlin with a draft directive on bringing
the troops to full combat readiness. At the direction of Stalin, it was
immediately finalized and signed by People's Commissar of Defense
Timoshenko, Chief of the General Staff Zhukov and a member of the
Main Military Council G. M. Malenkov. The directive addressed to the
military councils of the Leningrad, Baltic Special, Western Special, Kiev
Special, Odessa Military Districts and in a copy to the People's
Commissar of the Navy stated:

"1. During 22-23.6.41, a surprise attack by the Germans is possible on the fronts of the LVO, PribOVO, ZapOVO, KOVO, OdVO.

The attack may start with provocative actions. 2. The task of our troops is not to succumb to any provocative actions that can cause major complications.

At the same time, the troops of the Leningrad, Baltic, Western, Kyiv and Odessa military districts should be in full combat readiness, to meet a possible surprise attack by the Germans or their allies.

3. I order: a)

during the night of June 22, 1941, covertly occupy the firing points of fortified areas on the state border; b) before dawn on June 22,

1941, disperse all aviation, including military aviation, over field airfields, carefully disguise it; c) put all units on combat readiness. Troops to keep

dispersed and disguised;

d) put the air defense on alert without additional lifting of the assigned staff. Prepare all measures to darken cities and objects; e) not to carry out any other events without a special order"[109] . The transfer of

the directive in encrypted form from the General Staff to the districts ended only at 00:30 on

June 22. It took some time to decipher it. And, after all, it was possible to transmit to the districts the previously established signal: "Proceed with the implementation of the 1941 cover plan," which would have taken only a few minutes.

Before everyone else, at 24:00 on June 21, units of the 9th Army of the Odessa Military District were put on alert. And only after that a directive was received from Moscow. At the same time, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks decided to create the Southern Front, the management of which was to form the headquarters of the Moscow Military District. The commander of the district, General of the Army I.V. Tyulenev, learned about this decision

early in the morning on June 22. The directive arrived at the headquarters of the Western Special Military District at 00:45 on June 22. After 15 minutes, the commander of the district, General of the Army D. G. Pavlov, reported to the People's Commissar

over the past day and a half, German motorized columns have been continuously moving into the Suwalki ledge. Marshal Timoshenko advised the district commander not to panic, to gather headquarters in the morning just in case, and if there were separate provocations, to call. Immediately after the conversation with the People's Commissar, General of the Army Pavlov ordered the commanders and chiefs of staff of the armies to bring the troops into combat condition and occupy all military-type structures and even unfinished reinforced concrete fortifications. The commanders of the 3rd, 10th, and 4th Armies and the District Air Force reported to Pavlov that the troops and aviation were ready for battle. At 2:25 and 2:35 the directive received from Moscow was sent to the army headquarters. At the signal of "Thunderstorm", the "Red Package" was put into action, in

which there was a plan to cover the state border. The directive arrived at the headquarters of the Kyiv Special Military District at 01:45, and the army headquarters received it at 02:35 on June 22. However, orders and instructions to put the troops on combat readiness in most cases were received too late - a little more than half an hour remained before the start of the artillery preparation of the enemy. The commander of the 75th Rifle Division, Major General S. I. Nedvigin, reported a few days later to the commander of the 4th Army: "The Red Packet" was late, and —

hence the whole tragedy. Things were more prosperous in the Navy, since Marshal Timoshenko directly warned the People's Commissar of the Navy, Admiral Kuznetsov, about the need to bring the fleet to combat readiness No. 1. He immediately quickly gave the appropriate orders with the set password. As a result, the fleet was put on alert 3-4 hours before the start of the war.

What forces and means of the enemy were concentrated near the western borders of the Soviet Union?

By the end of June 21, 1941, the deployment of the German army groups North, Center, South, a separate German army Norway, Finnish and two Romanian armies, and a Hungarian corps group were completing their deployment. In total, in the first strategic echelon of the enemy there were 153 divisions and 19 brigades (of which German - 125 divisions and 2 brigades), over 4 thousand tanks and assault guns, about 4.4 thousand combat aircraft, almost 39 thousand guns and mortars; general

the number of this group, together with the German Air Force and Navy (192 ships of the main classes), amounted to almost 4.4 million people. The strategic reserve of the High Command of the Ground Forces (OKH - **German** Oberkommando des Heeres) of Germany had 28 divisions and brigades, about 500 thousand people, 8 thousand guns and mortars, 350 tanks[111] . The grouping of the Red Army troops looked as

follows. In total, by the beginning of June 22, the western border military districts consisted of 170 divisions, 2 separate rifle and 12 airborne brigades. These forces were relatively evenly distributed along the entire border and dispersed to a great depth. In addition, 7 divisions, 2 brigades, 11 operational regiments of internal troops and 49 border detachments were stationed here. At a distance of 10-50 km from the border in the first echelon of the covering armies there were 53 rifle and 3 cavalry divisions, 2 separate rifle brigades. The second echelon, located 50-100 km or more from the border, consisted of 13 rifle, 3 cavalry, 24 tank and 12 motorized divisions. 100-400 km from the border there were 62 divisions of the reserve of military districts, at the turn of the Western Dvina and Dnieper rivers - 13 divisions intended for the South-Western Front and the armies of the RGC. 10 divisions of internal military districts were on the move. Most of the mechanized corps were attached to the combined arms armies, which were entrusted with covering the state border. The main forces were located on a broad front, 30-40 km from the state border, and the divisions in the corps were located at a distance of 50-100 km or more

from one another. Such a dispersal of formations with the outbreak of hostilities required significant regroupings and did not allow in a short time to assemble the main forces of mechanized corps for delivering concentrated strikes. Most motorized rifle regiments did not have enough vehicles.

In total, the grouping of Red Army troops in the Western theater of operations, taking into account 16 divisions of the RGK, totaled 3 million people, about 39.4 thousand guns and mortars, 11 thousand tanks and more than 9.1 thousand combat aircraft[112] .

Thus, the enemy had a superiority of 1.3 times in manpower, an equal ratio in guns and mortars, but was inferior to the Soviet troops by 2.1 times in combat aircraft and 2.7 times in tanks. However, in terms of the quality of military equipment, the advantage was on the side of Germany. In addition, its troops were fully equipped and deployed, equipped with transport and were in a state of full combat readiness. The troops of the Red Army advanced to the western border, according to the majority of researchers, were not prepared either for defense, let alone for the offensive.

And how did the military leaders of the Red Army characterize the situation, who had to face the enemy in the very first days of the war? Marshal of the

Soviet Union K. K. Rokossovsky, who at that time commanded the 9th mechanized corps, recalled: "On June 21, I conducted an analysis of the command and staff night corps exercises. Having finished his business, he invited the division commanders to go fishing at dawn at the weekend. But in the evening, someone from our headquarters was informed through the line of the border troops that a corporal of the German army, a Pole by nationality, from Poznan had defected to the outpost, and claims: on June 22, the Germans will attack the Soviet Union. I decided to cancel my fishing trip. I phoned the division commanders and shared with them the message received from the border. We also talked at the headquarters of the corps. We decided to keep everything

Army General S.P. Ivanov, at that time the head of the operations department - deputy chief of staff of the 13th Army, noted: "Late on the evening of June 21, we finished the work. We slept in tents, enjoying the aroma of the night air infused with needles and herbs. Communication with the signalmen who remained under the command of Colonel Akhremenko was maintained by radio - at such a distance, our RSB-1 station operated perfectly. As usual, I slept soundly, but early in the morning I was awakened by the radio operator on duty, who said that the tankers had received an order to alert the personnel. The clock showed 5 hours and 30 minutes. The memoirs—

of other military leaders sound somewhat different, but on the whole they do not indicate complete readiness to repel aggression. So, on June 21, at the headquarters of the 3rd mechanized corps

arrived the commander of the troops of the Baltic Special Military District, Colonel-General F. I. Kuznetsov. He ordered the corps commander, General P. A. Rotmistrov, immediately, under the guise of going to field exercises, to withdraw parts of the corps from military camps to nearby forests and put them on full combat readiness. "On the day when the commander of the district visited us," recalled Chief Marshal of the Armored Forces P. A. Rotmistrov, "mechanized corps and only 6 rifle divisions were put on alert, while they (rifle formations) still had to make a march to the state border from the areas of camps and military

— camps"[115] . Marshal of the Soviet Union I. Kh. Bagramyan, who headed the operational department of the headquarters of the Kiev Special Military District on the eve of the war, testified: "Most of the cover formations were dispersed at a considerable distance from the state line, and the second echelon corps were 250–300 kilometers from it. Can you stop the enemy? Otherwise, the mobilization of the corps of the second echelon will be disrupted, and they will have to enter the battle in their current state - with a

large shortage in manpower and equipment . With the opinion that the Red Army was not ready to repel the invasion, its opponents also agree. So, General G. Guderian, who was on June 21, 1941 in the advanced units of the 2nd Panzer Group, recalled: "Careful observation of the Russians convinced me that they did not suspect anything about our intentions. In the courtyard of the fortress of Brest, which was visible from our observation posts, to the sounds of an orchestra, they were holding guards. Coastal fortifications along the Western Bug were not occupied by Russian troops. The work to strengthen the coast has hardly made any headway in recent weeks. The prospects for maintaining the moment of surprise were so great that the question arose whether, under such circumstances, it was worthwhile to carry out artillery preparation for an hour, as provided for by the order. Only out of caution, in order to avoid unnecessary losses as a result of the unexpected actions of the Russians at the moment of forcing the river, I ordered artillery prepara

From the book: ***Daines V. O.*** 1941. Year of Victory. Moscow: Yauza; Eksmo, 2009, pp. 5–46.

notes

Notes

1

In June 1939, A. M. Vasilevsky was appointed assistant chief of the 1st department of the General Staff, he is also the head of the 6th department.

2

See: Russian archive: Great Patriotic War: Orders of the People's
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Minister of Foreign Affairs of Finland.

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See: Orders of Lenin Leningrad Military District: Historical essay. L., 1968. S. 170.

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1941–1945 TI C. 277; RGVA. F. 4. Op. 14. D. 2746. L. 81.

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See: Russian archive: Great Patriotic War: Orders of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR. T. 13 (2–1). M.: TERRA, 1994. Document No. 70.

See: **Zakharov** M. B. The General Staff in the prewar years. M.: Military Publishing House, 1989. S. 213–217.

17

Italy and Turkey were not considered direct opponents, so their forces were not included in the calculation.

See: **Zakharov**M. B. Decree. op. S. 215.

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S. 28.

See: **Zhukov G.K.** Memories and reflections. In 3 vols. 10th ed.,
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